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A LIVING APPROACH TO DEATH: THERAPEUTIC
ASPECTS OF JEWISH MOURNING PRACTICES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
Joseph M. Hurwitz

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This dissertation, written by

JOSEPH M. HURWITZ

*under the direction of his Faculty Committee,
and approved by its members, has been presented
to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of
Theology at Claremont in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF RELIGION

Faculty Committee

Howard J. Clinchbell, Jr.

Floyd H. Ross

Samson H. Lewis

Date

April 29, 1966

F. Thomas Trotter

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INTRODUCTION

Of all the situations in which a rabbi, or any clergyman, finds himself, none is so sensitive nor fraught with helplessness and even fear as ministering to one who has just suffered bereavement. So many clergymen are filled with the ambivalent feeling of the desire to help on one hand and the feeling of helplessness on the other. Yet, help they must, because they occupy a unique position in times of bereavement. C. Charles Bachmann in his volume, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer writes:

The pastor, of all helping specialists, stands in a unique relationship to the grief sufferer, because he is the one person in the community to whom families continually turn for some form of pastoral care. This is most clearly demonstrated to the time of death, though grief is experienced in other crises situations which result in severing the ties of relationship - divorce, separation, loss of job, amputations, and illness to mention just a few.

It would be unthinkable to conduct a burial service without a clergyman, priest or rabbi officiating. Yet the pastor is not always fully aware of the role he must play with the grief sufferer. This is one of the roles, however, he cannot 'shove aside' nor turn over to others. He needs to be more sure of himself, in his ministry to the grief sufferer and to assume the pastoral role of seelsorge - the care of and cure of souls - the kind of understanding and helpfulness, which no one else can provide.¹

This paper is directed toward the pulpit rabbi, a man, who like Bachmann's pastor, stands in unique relationship to the

¹C. Charles Bachmann, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 10.

grief sufferer. The purpose of this paper is to show how the modern rabbi can utilize modern grief techniques with those found in Jewish tradition, which had in its folk wisdom, numerous healthy outlets for the mourning process.

An attempt will be made to give a modern theoretical framework based on the "Revised Model" of pastoral counseling and on Reality Therapy to show those aspects of the Jewish mourning process which have borne the test of time and are as modern as tomorrow.

The first chapter will be a review of the ingredients of successful mourning based on the latest literature in grief therapy in order to distill some worthwhile pattern of "healthy" mourning.

The second chapter will describe in detail the traditional Jewish funeral, and survey the various customs and laws which may have psychological connotations.

The third chapter will discuss how traditional Jewish practices meet the requirements of successful mourning in the modern context.

The fourth chapter will deal with how the traditional Jewish funeral has changed under the influence of American culture as exemplified in modern funeral practices.

Chapter five will analyze how modern cross-cultural influences have weakened the Jewish funeral in regards to the psychological needs of the mourner.

Chapter six concerns itself with how certain cross-cultural influences have improved the mourning process of the Jewish funeral, or in other words, how certain modern practices have encouraged healthy grief responses.

Chapter seven will be an attempt to synthesize a new approach to mourning based on "the Revised Model" of pastoral counseling as advanced by Dr. Howard Clinebell, Jr., in his unpublished manuscript on Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling as well as Dr. William Glasser's book Reality Therapy,² with the traditional Jewish approach to bereavement with its accumulated store of folk wisdom.

Chapter eight will be an analysis of the role of the rabbi utilizing this approach. It will attempt to define his role and offer concrete suggestions for actions based on the above approach.

As far as the source material for this paper is concerned, I have made use of the standard texts of grief and mourning, such as Paul Irion's, The Funeral and the Mourner,³ Edgar N. Jackson's, Understanding Grief,⁴ and C. Charles Bachmann's,

²William Glasser, Reality Therapy (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965).

³Paul E. Irion, The Funeral and the Mourners (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954).

⁴Edgar N. Jackson, Understanding Grief (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957).

Ministering to the Grief Sufferer.⁵ Although the subject of death and bereavement has been written on widely, there is little written on grief therapy from the "pastoral rabbinical" point of view. There is a great deal written about the Jewish laws of mourning in the various Jewish codes, but nothing from a psychological point of view or grief therapy point of view with the following exceptions: First, there is a chapter from Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's book, Peace of Mind,⁶ entitled, "Grief's Slow Wisdom;" second, there is a Doctoral thesis by Rabbi Jack E. Spiro entitled, A Time to Mourn; Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism;⁷ third, there is a small volume entitled, A Guide to Life⁸ by Rabbi H. Rabinowicz. These three works will be dealt with in detail in the first chapter to see how far they encompass, and their limitations will be examined.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Howard Clinebell, Jr. for a chance remark he made in his study concerning his new book on basic counseling. He has given me the inspiration to relate the newest thrust in pastoral counseling to the age-old wisdom of Jewish practice.

⁵Bachmann, op. cit.

⁶Joshua Loth Liebman, Peace of Mind (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1955).

⁷Jack D. Spiro, "A Time to Mourn: Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism" (Unpublished D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College. Jewish Institute of Religion).

⁸H. Rabinowicz, A Guide To Life (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1964).

CHAPTER I

PATTERNS OF HEALTHY MOURNING

To many people of the Jewish community, the rabbi is dispensable. Some do not need him to officiate at their weddings; others do not want to hear him sermonize; many never see the inside of his office or set foot in a sanctuary where he officiates. According to a prominent Jewish educator, one-half of all the Jews in the United States are not formally affiliated with congregations.¹

There is one area, however, when most every Jew, no matter what his previous interest towards Judaism was, turns to the rabbinate for guidance, solace, comfort, and/or service. That area is the area of bereavement. No Jew gets buried by a Justice of the Peace, no Jew has a University lecturer deliver the eulogy over his remains, no Jew, although he may never have set foot in a synagogue, wants his passing to be unmarked by the very words of ritual which he so ignored during his life. Some Jews may not be welcomed into the people of his fathers by means of a brit (circumcision), some may not be married by Jewish custom, some may not learn their Jewish traditions, but a Rabbi will most likely be asked to officiate at their demise.

¹Conversation with Dr. Henry Fisher, Dean of Adult Education, University of Judaism, January 25, 1966.

Thus, it is incumbent on a modern rabbi to be prepared for the vast number of funerals he will handle during his career. He not only needs to know the ritual order of the funeral, but also the psychological insights which will help him help the family in its hour of trial. He needs to know some of the techniques for helping the grief wound drain in the process of healthy mourning.

To whom and to where does the rabbi go for help in such a charged situation? To be sure, Judaism is replete with laws of mourning. The Codes, the Talmud, the Shulhan Aruch tell a great deal about the rituals of mourning. All these sources were written centuries ago, but they still contain a great deal of folk wisdom. (In the next chapter, there will be an examination of some of the ancient rules and rituals of traditional Judaism). Nevertheless, ancient sources are not enough. The rabbi must examine the insights of grief therapy from modern sources in order to combine the ancient folk-wisdom of Jewish tradition with modern techniques of grief therapy. Yet, what is lacking at present is a good practical guide for the rabbi, based not only on ancient sources but on modern insights. There are many eulogy books written such as A Treasury of Comfort² by Sidney Greenberg in which he surveys various poems and selections for use in the funeral. Morton Wallach has edited an excellent

²Sidney Greenberg, A Treasury of Comfort (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1954).

collection of eulogies which one can also use during the service.³ The Conservative, Reform and Orthodox groups, have their own rabbinical handbooks which help the clergyman with an outline of the service plus source material for eulogies. Nowhere, though, in these books is any advice, guidance or suggestions on how to deal with a grief situation. In all the doctoral theses which have been published by the major Jewish seminaries only one, which we will discuss below, deals in any way with the question of grief. Not only is there a paucity of literature on Jewish grief, but if one will glance at the catalogs of all the major seminaries, one will not find any courses dealing with the handling of bereavement, specifically.

There are only three modern discussions of bereavement from a Jewish point of view, and one of those is not a complete book but a chapter of a work by Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman, the famous Peace of Mind.⁴ Although it is short, it is in many ways the most effective of the group. Perhaps it might be wise to start with this chapter by Liebman entitled, "Grief's Slow Wisdom" to see what modern psychological insight it offers.

Liebman talks generally about the problem of human mortality and the difficulty that religion has in dealing with it. He discusses the "strategy of solace" for these poignant

³Morton Wallack (ed.), Eulogies (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1965).

⁴Joshua Loth Liebman, Peace of Mind (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1955).

hours when man walks through the valley of shadows.⁵ He makes mention of the ways in which different religions deal with the problem of death. In most, there has been widespread confusion as to the right approach to take about grief.⁶ Liebman pays respect to the leading pioneer in this area of the emotional life of man, none other than Dr. Erich Lindermann, who notes the importance of "grief work." (Defined below, p. 14). Liebman underscores Lindermann's intimation that unless grief work is done, various type of physical diseases and neuroses may result.⁷ In other words, Liebman performs a service to his Jewish readers by informing them of the pioneer work of Lindermann.

Specifically, Liebman offers three laws for governing grief. The first law, then, which should be followed in the loss of a loved one is: Express as much grief as you actually feel. Liebman exhorts us not to be ashamed of our emotions, not to be afraid of breaking down under the strain of a loss. He intimates that the function of friends is to be a sounding board for the bereaved. Instead of trying to distract attention from the loss, he maintains that friends should offer the opportunity and encouragement to the man who has lost a loved one, to talk about his loss, to dwell upon his sorrow,

⁵Liebman, op. cit., p. 82.

⁶Ibid., p. 84.

⁷Ibid., p. 86.

and to rehearse the beauty and virtues of the departed one.⁸ He smashes the illusion about human nature that the expression of grief will lead to a breakdown but states that distortion or concealment or denial of such an expression will prove the breeding ground for delayed breakdown.⁹ He blames the complete avoidance of outbursts as the dynamics which scar or tear the fabric of the inner soul.¹⁰

Liebman's second truth about the grief situation is: We must learn how to extricate ourselves from the bondage of the physical existence and coexistence of the loved one.¹¹ In life, people build their hopes and prayers many times on husband, daughter, and even close friends. When death comes, they cannot quickly erase the expectancies of a lifetime from the state of memory, and the surviving one yearns in vain for the presence of the comrade.¹² Liebman suggests that a person can regain his mental balance if the pain and loneliness of loss will be courageously accepted and lived through rather than evaded and avoided. The loneliness will be made easier if new patterns of interaction with other people are established and new avenues of creative expression found.¹³ Liebman's main point is that we extricate ourselves from the bondage of physical existence of a loved one by talking to others of the loss and the magnitude

⁸Ibid., p. 88.

⁹Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 88.

¹¹Ibid., p. 88.

¹²Ibid., p. 88.

¹³Ibid., p. 88.

of the bereavement and then eventually, the pain becomes bearable.

The third law is expressed as follows: When death destroys an important relationship, it is essential that someone be found partially capable of replacing that relationship.¹⁴ He maintains that equilibrium will be restored when the bereaved person discovers some situation demanding the same or similar patterns of conduct. For example, a mother who loses a young child suffers one of the most tragic bereavements of all, particularly because often the mother and the child have not yet become separate personalities. When a tragedy occurs, the love pattern must be re-established in some way, according to Liebman. He suggests that she interest herself in daily work in a nursery school and that she be stimulated by the minister or psychologist to transfer the conduct pattern that she had fashioned in the relationship with her own child into work with a group of children.¹⁵

There are two remarks that might be made about Liebman's contributions. Number one, it does not appear that there are actually three laws of grief as he maintains. It would appear that the first law, namely expressing as much grief as you actually feel, is really a part of the second law which is learning how to extricate ourselves from the physical existence and co-existence of a loved one. As a matter of fact, on

¹⁴Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 90.

page 91, Liebman himself seems to concur when he writes:

We have seen thus far that when a person suffers a real tragic loss, he will be aided in his future adjustment to life, first by expressing rather than repressing his grief, and secondly, by having relatives or friends aid him to find some parallel pattern of action, some new area of life interest, which will serve as a substitute for the pattern which death has annihilated. It will be recognized, of course, that the substitute patterns of life will not come spontaneously and without effort. . . .¹⁶

Thus, it seems that even Liebman lumps the three laws into two laws of handling grief.

What is more interesting, however, is that Rabbi Liebman does not bring any typical Jewish approach to grief therapy. The two laws that he enunciates are quite applicable to any religious group. He does mention in passing that traditional Judaism had the wisdom to devise almost all the procedures for healthy-minded grief that the contemporary psychologist counsels, although Judaism naturally does not possess the tools for scientific experiment and systematic case study. Liebman goes on to mention, very briefly, the fact that the Bible records how unashamed was the expression of sorrow on the part of patriarchs.¹⁷ He discusses in three sentences the ritual of Shiva, the period of consolation, as well as friends and relatives visiting the mourner and discussing the deceased.¹⁸ For instance, there is a quote from the Sayings of the Fathers

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

which great rabbinic sage, Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazer, says:

"Seek not to comfort thy neighbor while his dead still lies before him. . .¹⁹ Liebman just seems to glance over these and drop them as though they are only of historical interest. By devoting such short space to traditional, particularly Jewish practices, he seems to intimate that one should really concentrate on the latest findings in psychology rather than the accumulated folk-wisdom of old. Nevertheless, Rabbi Liebman has made a contribution to the grief literature of Judaism.

Rabbi Jack D. Spiro's doctoral thesis, A Time to Mourn: The Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism is a work which delves in great detail into grief and mourning in Jewish practice. Five dominant themes emerge from Rabbi Spiro's work:

1. Spiro maintains that primary sources of grief feelings are unconscious and are based on the dynamic structure of the individual. He stresses the opposing forces of love and aggressiveness in which these two impulses continually contend with each other and are responsible for the basic conflict experienced by every person. When the grief situation occurs, this polarity causes the frustration of love impulses from the painful feelings of guilt.²⁰

2. The conflict of guilt and frustration of love are

¹⁹Ibid., p. 96.

²⁰Jack D. Spiro, "A Time to Mourn: Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism" (Unpublished D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College. Jewish Institute of Religion).

the dramatic factors which in turn give rise to the state of anxiety. In this state, the bereaved is overwhelmed by the distress of conflict and seeks to protect himself from the threat of emotional collapse by the employment of defenses. Spiro lists these defenses as denial, repression, regression, self-punishment, and projection. He makes the point that rather than helping the mourner, these defenses actually hinder the attempt to recover from the loss and readjust to life.²¹

3. Spiro then describes how Judaism takes into account the impact of these defences on the individual through its laws, rites and mores. He analyzes each one and shows how Judaism helps the mourner to overcome these defences or how they can be expressed in the socially and individually acceptable ways, and therefore, eventually subdued.²²

4. Spiro states that Judaism provides for the basic problems in each individual mourner by an attitude towards death which is realistic, by doing the right thing and knowing what is expected of him, by culturally sanctioned rites and rules, and by being given the freedom and right to express his deepest feelings.²³

5. The key to therapeutic efficacy of mourning is the ability of the mourner to transfer his dependency needs and love impulses to other persons and objects, according to Spiro. He

²¹Ibid., p. 206.

²²Ibid., p. 207.

²³Ibid., p. 208.

writes that social structure of Judaism gives the mourner the opportunity to be active in the group and to detach himself from the deceased. He then can feel a sense of acceptance by the community. This feeling of acceptance helps him to transfer his ties of love and to alleviate the sense of guilt. Moreover, the community conveys to him the feeling that he is definitely needed and must face certain responsibilities as a participant in the community. This sense of responsibility helps since the mourner may develop a feeling of being neglected and unwanted, consequent to the death of a loved object.²⁴

In a very brief appendix, Spiro deals with the situation of today. He maintains that Jewish cultural life has changed greatly since the laws of mourning were formulated.²⁵ He states that the laws apply principally to the self-contained Jewish community which ceased to exist in the 18th Century.²⁶ He makes the point that the synagogue should take the place of the overall Jewish community and be active in the bereavement situation. He suggests the use of a Chevra Kadisha or funeral committee, to arrange for the funeral and burial needs.²⁷

If Spiro's work is so detailed and oriented toward Jewish ritual, is there any need for another work dealing in the same general area? It must be admitted that unlike Liebman, Spiro does bring in Jewish ritual and analyzes it in detail.

²⁴Ibid., p. 209.

²⁶Ibid., p. 211.

²⁵Ibid., p. 210.

²⁷Ibid., p. 218.

However, there seem to be two areas of his thesis which might allow for another work to be done. Firstly, Spiro builds his foundation on Freud and psychoanalysis. A lot of his conclusions are based on strictly Freudian concepts. If one accepts the Freudian theories, all well and good. However, as David Switzer writes in his unpublished manuscript:

The second way in which Spiro fails to accomplish the task which it might be hoped that he would do in regards to his elaboration of grief is in his selection of theoretical framework in which is explicated, and this forms a criticism of the whole psychoanalytic approach to grief as summarized in this entire chapter. This is not to imply that Spiro is "wrong" in having chosen psychoanalysis as his theoretical model, or that the psychoanalytic theory of personality is wrong in some absolute sense. The variety of theoretical approaches to personality should make it rather plain that personality itself is not given one the proper symbolic formulation of its own character to mankind. As a matter of fact, many different theories offer their own insights. This does not mean that all are equally valid, or that there is no error in any of them. However, the major thrust of the thesis of the present work is that acknowledging the invaluable contributions of Freud and those others dealt with in this chapter and the many insights that still are quite valid, the formulation of statements dealing with such matters as grief, anxiety, is done more meaningfully in interpersonal terms. These are the terms which are more easily translated into the practical aspects of dealing with grief in the concrete situation. . . .²⁸

His entire thesis then, is based on understanding mourning from a psychoanalytic or Freudian point of view. To the average rabbi, this approach, though very valuable, if translated into understandable terms is not the complete answer. It would appear, that a more beneficial approach would be to

²⁸David K. Switzer, Unpublished Manuscript.

utilize additional types therapy which may or may not be based on Freud such as the "Revised Model" (based on a Freudian view of psychodynamics and Freudian ego psychology) and Reality Therapy (not based on Freud). Secondly, Rabbi Spiro does not actually give a course of action which can be implemented by the average rabbi in the pulpit. Instead of taking the leadership and using the insights that he has developed in making a positive and dynamic program to help the grief sufferer, Rabbi Spiro relegates to a few sentences in an appendix; something about a Chevrah Kadishah society to take care of the arrangements. Therefore, the main thrust of Rabbi Spiro's work was not a practical approach, but rather a theoretical one.

The third major Jewish oriented book is entitled A Guide to Life by Rabbi H. Rabinowicz of London. It is a compendium of Jewish laws and customs of mourning. The advantage of such a work as Rabinowicz's is that it arranges all the laws of mourning that are used in modern times in a logical and concise manner. He runs the gamut all the way from visiting the sick to the setting up of a tombstone after the appropriate time. Another area in which he is helpful is that he gives the traditional reasons for such laws. Rabinowicz, however, does not present in any logical manner, psychological guides to grief therapy. Frequently in his book, one can find certain comments which have a psychological base such as a statement that gifts are not approved of because they might bring joy and thus

lessen the natural sorrow which the mourner feels.²⁹ What Rabinowicz is saying in effect is that one should face reality of death. In another chapter when writing about the Kaddish (the memorial prayer) which will be dealt with in the second chapter, Rabinowicz says that this is good because it draws a man back to his synagogue and back to his people with "regular and incessant rhythm."³⁰ Thus he seems to be saying that in order to have a healthy grief situation a man must have interaction with his community. Even though these little recommendations are scattered throughout the book there is no attempt to base any theory of grief therapy on a psychological base. The main emphasis of Rabinowicz is just to collect and explain the historical background of mourning practices.

When we move from the Jewish field into the general area of grief therapy, we find a much greater mine of information. An attempt will be made to give a brief survey of that material which is particularly relevant to the pastoral situation.

The first modern study of any import as far as bereavement was concerned was Mourning and Melancholia by Sigmund Freud.³¹ Freud recognized a likeness between people who were in mourning and those people who suffered from

²⁹ H. Rabinowicz, A Guide to Life (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1964), p. 70.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

³¹ Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," Collected Papers, Vol. IV (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), passim.

melancholy. Freud indicated that the struggle in grieving can be so intense that a turning away from reality issues, and that the attachment of the libido of the mourner to the deceased is painfully and gradually broken in the process of mourning. Each single one of the memories and hopes which bound the libido to the object is brought up and catharsis, the detachment of the libido from it is accomplished.³²

Freud was one of the first modern writers to emphasize the working through of grief.

Although Freud was the starting point of modern grief work, major part of the credit for the modern understanding of grief must be given to Dr. Erich Lindemann in his psychiatric study of a hundred and one patients.³³ Many of these psychiatric interviews included relatives of the patients who died in the hospital following the disaster of the Coconut Grove fire as well as relatives of members of the armed forces in World War II. Lindemann lists a great many physical reactions, which are common to individual's experiencing acute grief such as tightness in the throat, choking, shortness of breath, lack of muscular strength and exhaustion. Out of his contact with these people. Lindemann deduced that one had to do grief work and define his grief work as emancipation from the bondage to the deceased,

³²Ibid., p. 154.

³³Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. XIV, No. 136, (September, 1963) pp. 8-18.

readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships.³⁴ Lindemann cautions against avoiding the intense distress of the grief experience since it is natural that the bereaved person tends to repress his emotions and might appear calm in the face of the tragedy. Lindemann stresses an open expression of grief emotions and weeping, or extended conversations about the deceased in order to give air to their repressed tensions. One can recall the memories of the past, think freely of the deceased and face up to the adjustments which are now necessary.

Paul E. Johnson in his book entitled Psychology of Pastoral Care,³⁵ recalls a class lecture by Lindemann in which he gives four steps of how the pastor may help the bereaved person. First Lindemann urged the pastor to look for other symptoms than pure grief, the pastor will need to be on the watch for hidden clues for hidden grief so he can give kindly attention and helpful assistance before too much damage is done.³⁶

Secondly, the pastor should encourage the grief work by responsive listening and empathy to realize what the separation means to the bereaved and to try to live through the experience with him. The best ways to help this releasing is for the pastor to review step by step the events preceeding the death and

³⁴Ibid., p. 22.

³⁵Paul E. Johnson, Psychology of Pastoral Care (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953)

³⁶Ibid., p. 252.

permitting the bereaved to expand as much as he desires upon them. Also, he should go over with the bereaved the difficulties that he will confront in going on to make adjustments called for in the changing life situation.³⁷

The third responsibility of the pastor would be to relieve the guilt feelings which are at the bottom of the grief experience. Johnson seems to intimate that Lindemann says the pastor is in a logical position to deal with guilt as he stands between the guilty person and God. Johnson also adds that the minister is an interpreter of the moral standards of the community and thus stands between the guilty person and other people who are supposed to accuse or disapprove his misdeeds.³⁸

The fourth step for the pastor is to challenge the mourner to renew growth. The mourner should not shelter himself by too many protective measures.³⁹

Paul E. Irion in his volume, The Funeral and the Mourners⁴⁰ limits his therapy of mourning to having two major parts -- accepting memories of the deceased and sharing the grief work by social interaction.⁴¹ As far as the first part is concerned, he underlines the fact that unpleasant memories and

³⁷Ibid., p. 253.

³⁸Ibid., p. 253.

³⁹Ibid., p. 253.

⁴⁰Paul E. Irion, The Funeral and the Mourners (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1965)

⁴¹Ibid., p. 36.

negative feelings of the deceased must be called to mind, scrutinized and discussed. Until the mourner is able to live with the image of the deceased with all his positive or negative connotations, the painful experience of grief will continue.⁴²

Doing grief work by social inter-action, according to Irion, mainly deals with the need to talk about these memories. Emphasizing this as a talking process has a triple therapeutic value. Firstly, it is cathartic. As the experience is discussed over and over, the painfulness is lessened and relieved. He recalls that inner tensions which are built up in the grief stricken man require a release to relieve this tension. He likens a bereaved individual, released by talking, to an angry man who yells or a terrified woman who screams. When the deep feelings of loss are brought to the surface where they can be dealt with, the tension level decreases.⁴³

Secondly, the talking process provides insight for the individual himself and the feelings and problems which are troubling him can be seen more clearly.⁴⁴

Thirdly, by talking a relationship is established which is supportive. By sharing the work of mourning with the individual, the minister indicates his real concern for the persons well being and partially fills a vacuum of loneliness which accompanies bereavement.⁴⁵

⁴²Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 37.

⁴³Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 37.

Edgar M. Jackson, who has written extensively on the grief situation, also uses Lindemann as a basis for handling one's grief. In his volume, For the Living, he repeats the three important steps of facing reality, breaking some of the bonds that tie to a person who has died, developing ways that will make it possible for a person to find new interests.⁴⁶ In his work Understanding Grief,⁴⁷ he elaborates on the pastor's role as a counselor which is specifically useful during the period of acute grief.

The pastor's role as a counselor is clearly defined. He is assigned the role by the community of bringing comfort wisely, both for the immediate situation, and the longer period of life. Lindemann suggests that there are three things which can be done by a pastor, chaplain, or counselor. These have to be found to be specifically useful to the period of acute grief. First is the maintenance of contact. When one discerning and competent individual keeps an active contact with the person through the important first days, the confusion is cut down, a sustained communication with a trusted individual is made possible, emotional stress is relieved, and the measure of emotional security in the framework of unstable things is guaranteed. This person should be able to communicate full information concerning physical matters to the bereaved so that the reality relationship will be sustained and the same time the confidence in the counselor made secure.

Second, this counselor should be able to deliver messages that are important to the bereaved so that they can be interpreted and related to other events that are happening. Then he can help a grieving person to deal with his problems wisely. The counselor should not do

⁴⁶ Edgar M. Jackson, For the Living (Des Moines: Channel Press, 1963), p. 29.

⁴⁷ Edgar M. Jackson, Understanding Grief (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957)

for him what he can do for himself, but he should help the person do what he can and then relieve the stress where it appears to be too taxing.

Third, as opportunity affords and if necessary when the opportunity is made the counselor should help the person face reality of the situation and to think to the deeper meanings of his new responsibilities, his new relationships, the new problems of adjustment. He should be the back board against which the mourner can work out his new thoughts and feelings. He should not hurry the person at his speech nor should he allow the person so to obstruct the process that he will avoid facing the facts of his new life as they must be faced.⁴⁸

Jackson reiterates Lindemann's basic work in grief therapy and uses it as the matrix of his own contributions to the field.

In a volume specifically directed toward the pastoral counselor, C. Charles Bachmann lists ten constructive ways of handling grief.⁴⁹ The first constructive way is that feelings need to be expressed. It is of utmost importance for the bereaved to say that it hurts and that he is able to express this hurt openly and unashamedly before somebody who understands. Some of the sting will be removed as the grief sufferer ventilates his feelings and undergoes a cathartic effect.⁵⁰

Second, facts need to be faced. One cannot dodge the issue of life and death and realities have to be faced each time a loved one passes away.⁵¹

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 154.

⁴⁹C. Charles Bachmann, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 46.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 46.

⁵¹Ibid.

Third, the pain and loss need to be accepted. He must come to terms with his grief by accepting things as they are now or he will never fully resolve for himself the loss.⁵²

Fourth, there must be a need for assimilation of the fact of loss in daily living. Once having accepted the loss one must be then able to act appropriately to be oneself again to regain equilibrium as quickly as time permits, to rejoin groups and join with other persons again in constant interaction of life with all of its inter-personal encounter. Bachmann advises that one quickly resumes old duties or assumes new ones - but not too quickly.⁵³

Fifth, there is a need for protective layers. These layers are insulation support from closely knit families or strong solidarity with a strong social, cultural or ethnic group.⁵⁴

Sixth, Bachmann indicates the need to verbalize feelings. He says that if the pastor is willing to allow the person to verbalize his feelings, the bitter gall may be drained off and the healing balm may be poured to the wounds.⁵⁵ (This appears to be much the same as number one namely the feelings that need to be expressed).

Seventh, Bachmann says that the pastor may be able to assist with successful management of grief if he is able to help

⁵²Ibid., p. 47.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 48.

the individual grief sufferer explore alternative courses of action in order that a plan may be formulated for his future.⁵⁶

Eighth, Bachman stresses the need for a community "grief anonymous." The pastor could, if he were willing, form a group of people who have worked with the experience of grief and would contact the family or individual within a week after the loss has occurred.⁵⁷ In other words he would use people who have gone through the same thing to help a recently bereaved person.

Nine, Bachmann underlines the need for relatedness. He states that grief sufferers are in need of relatedness to the community at large and only to fellow grief sufferers where there is a need for finding creative fulfillment.⁵⁸

Ten, finally there is a need to be needed.⁵⁹ What Bachmann seems to be implying although he doesn't spell it out is that if there is some way to make a person feel needed, then this will help with the grief work. An example might be a mother who realized that she was needed to take care of her small children and in the absorption of this felt need, had an opportunity to give her life service and meaning.

In summary, Bachmann seems to have used some imagination and has expanded upon Lindemann's basic theories of grief work. He speaks directly to the pastor and his book is rich with helpful hints in handling the grief situation. Of all the books

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 50

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 49.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

that have been written, Bachmann appears to be the most detailed and practical guide for the minister. However, it is actually oriented toward the Protestant clergy and cannot be expected to bring in the Jewish background or Jewish sources which would be particularly suited for the rabbi.

William F. Rogers writing in Pastoral Psychology⁶⁰ describes how a pastor would work in the grief situation. Rogers describes four needs. The first need is that the bereaved must have his support from others. Having lost an important person from his psychic structure he needs support from others commensurate to the size of his loss. Often the clergyman will be the logical person to form a meaningful relationship to the bereaved, according to Rogers.⁶¹

The second need which the bereaved has is for actualizing the loss. Rogers differentiates between the intellectual acknowledgement of the fact and the emotional acceptance of the fact. Frequently, time may pass before the full impact of the loss is felt. Rogers claims that verbalization can speed the process of actualizing the loss, and sometimes the minister is the one who will provide this opportunity.⁶²

The third need, and closely related to the second one, is the need to express sorrow, when sorrow is felt there is a need

⁶⁰William F. Rogers, "Pastor's Work With Grief," Pastoral Psychology, Vol. XIV (September, 1963), 19-26.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 23.

⁶²Ibid.

to express this sorrow through weeping and through verbalization. If the pastor is emotionally stable, he may be the one who can sit by while the bereaved weeps without either preventing the weeping or making the mourner feel guilty or embarrassed. From the weeping, the mourner may then go on to tell his total relationship with the deceased and from there begin to grasp the meaning of death and then strive to rebuild his own world from which his beloved is gone.⁶³

The fourth need which some of the bereaved will have is a verbalization of hostility. It is obvious in life that a person has many ambivalent feelings toward his loved ones. Ventilation is needed and will aid in clarifying the question of the origin of guilt feelings. These guilt feelings need to be confronted if a person is to have a healthy mourning situation.⁶⁴

Finally, the bereaved has further need of establishing new relationships. Having lost the psychological support and friendship due to his grief, he may lose his ability to establish new relationships since he may be disturbed by hostility and guilt. Rogers points out that the more need he has to form new relationships the more incapable he is of forming them.⁶⁵ The pastor can fulfill a vital function in helping form new relationships for the mourner.

Granger Westberg's Good Grief concerns itself with

⁶³Ibid., p. 24.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 25.

describing the grief reactions. He lists shock, expressing emotion, depression and loneliness, physical symptoms of distress, panic, sense of guilt, hostility and resentment, and being unable to return to usual activities until we struggle to re-adjust to reality.⁶⁶ Westburg does not spell out exactly what he means by grief work but rather throughout the volume exhorts the mourners not to wallow in gloom,⁶⁷ to accept the idea of feeling guilty,⁶⁸ and to express one's emotions.⁶⁹ The book is directed toward the layman and its intent appears to be to help the mourner understand that he is not unique in undergoing certain grief reactions.

In an article by Howard Whitman entitled "How to Help Someone in Sorrow" found in the volume A Treasury of Comfort edited by Sidney Greenberg⁷⁰ there can be found ten points that seem to be quite helpful. Mr. Whitman went to many priests and rabbis to get the specific suggestions for helping someone in a bereaved situation.

1. Don't try to "buck them up." A man who has lost a loved one naturally takes it hard. "Bucking him up sounds as though one is minimizing his loss." Rather an expression of the

⁶⁶Granger E. Westburg, Good Grief (Rock Island: Augustus Press, 1962), p. 55.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 40.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 52.

⁷⁰Greenberg, op. cit., p. 145.

honest attitude, "Yes, it's tough and I sure know it is," makes a person feel free to express grief and recover from it. "Don't take it so hard" approach deprives him of the natural emotion of grief and stops up the safety valve that he has been given.⁷¹

2. Don't try to divert them. Whitman quotes Rabbi Martin Ryback of Norwalk, Connecticut who says that many people making condolence calls purposely veer away from the subject and make small talk about football, fishing, the weather, anything but the reason for their visit. The rabbi calls this "Trying to Camouflage Death." The task of the mourner is to face the fact of death and go on from there. Rabbi Ryback suggests that sitting silently and saying nothing is better than making obvious attempts to distract.⁷²

3. Don't be afraid to talk about the person who has passed away. Whitman quotes Rabbi Henry E. Kagan of Mt. Vernon, New York who says that talking about a person as one knew him in the fullness of his life is recreating a living picture to replace the picture of death.⁷³

4. Don't be afraid of causing tears. Fear of causing tears, more than anything else, makes people stiff and ineffective. Whitman quotes the Reverend D. Russell Hetsler of Brazil, Indiana, who maintains that when people don't allow their friends to cry they are really depriving their friends of the greatest help they could give them. "If a comment brings tears," Pastor

⁷¹Ibid., p. 145.

⁷²Ibid., p. 146.

⁷³Ibid.

Hetsler says, "remember, they are healthy tears."⁷⁴

5. Let them talk. According to Whitman, the Reverend Vern Swartsfager of San Francisco states that sorrowing people need to talk, where as friends worry about their ability to say the right things. He says that they ought to be worrying about their ability to listen. "If the warmth of your presence can get your friend to start talking, keep quiet and listen, even though he repeats the same things a dozen times."⁷⁵ he concludes.

6. Reassure - don't argue. Whitman repeats what Rabbi Joseph R. Narot of Miami points out saying that everybody who loses a loved one has guilt feelings that may not be justified - but they are natural. When a person depreciates himself one should not argue with them in saying that they are wrong and they shouldn't feel that way, but rather one can give reassurance. The bereaved must slowly come to the realization that he or she was in all probability a pretty good husband, wife, or parent.⁷⁶

7. Communicate - don't isolate. Father Thomas Bresnaham of Detroit says that too often a person who has lost a loved one is overwhelmed with visitors for a week or so, then the house is empty. Even good friends sometimes stay away, believing that people in sorrow "like to be alone." The Father states that this is the silent treatment and that there is

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 147.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Ibid.

nothing worse. The bereaved has not only lost their loved ones but have lost us too. Father Bresnahan urges that one keep in touch and to see the bereaved more often than before.⁷⁷

8. Perform some concrete act. Reverend William B. Ayers, of Wallaston, Massachusetts, told Whitman about a sorrowing husband who lost all interest in food until a friend brought over his favorite dish and simply left it there at suppertime. "That is a wonderful way to help by a concrete deed which in itself may be small but carries the immense implication that you care," Reverend Ayers declared.⁷⁸ We should make it our business, if a friend is in sorrow, to do at least one practical tangible act of kindness such as errands, taking the children to school, bringing them a meal, doing the dishes, making necessary phone calls or picking up the mail.⁷⁹

9. Swing into action. Action is the symbol of going on living. By swinging into action with your friend, whether at his hobby or his work, you can help build a bridge for the future. Sorrowing people according to the Reverend J. T. Morrow of St. Paul, tend to drop out of things. He intimates that they should be doing something in order to get them on their psychological feet.⁸⁰

10. Get them out of themselves. This is the advice of Father James Keller, leader of the Cristophers, who says that

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 148.

⁸⁰Ibid.

once you have your friend doing things for himself his grief is nearly cured. Once you have him doing things for others, it is cured. Grief runs a natural course and will pass. But if there is only a vacuum behind it self pity will rush in to fill it. To help your friend along the normal course of recovery, guide him to a new interest. Volunteer work for a charity, enrollment in a community group to help youngsters, committee work in church or Temple are ways of getting people "out of themselves."⁸¹

Whitman's selected quotes are very practical and are designed for the layman. However, they can be used to great advantage by the clergyman. To be sure there is some redundancy in his ten suggestions, particularly nine and ten which almost seem alike, and two and three which could be combined. Nevertheless, in a down to earth style, Whitman gives us some living examples of practical help.

Up to this point, the discussion has centered around grief therapy generally. Perhaps it might be wise to include at this point a brief outline of the functions for the funeral service in particular as an augment to grief therapy in general. The funeral is the key part of the mourning process and certainly the most dramatic. As Jack D. Forest in his article, "The Major Emphasis of the Funeral" from Pastoral Psychology⁸² writes,

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Jack D. Forest, "The Major Emphasis of the Funeral," Pastoral Psychology, XIV (June, 1963), 19-24.

It is a part of the business of a funeral to help people to accept the fact of death. The change has already been made. Things are changed. This is not the time to deny it. If you sincerely care for the mourner you must help him to see that death is a final realistic thing.⁸³

Paul D. Irion in The Funeral and the Mourners lists nine criteria for evaluating a "successful" funeral.

1. The funeral must deal with death realistically.
2. The funeral must present a vision of God which will be of comfort and help to the mourners in their suffering, and this includes the understanding of love of God, the nearness of God, and his concern for his people.
3. The funeral must see man as an individual of worth, turning man's attention to the importance of his personal integration and the resources which God offers for his strengthening and stabilizing of himself.
4. The funeral must demonstrate that the Christian faith is a resource which enables the individual to mourn, rather than a substitute for mourning.
5. The funeral must accept and recognize deep feelings, rather than cover them up by a superficial aestheticism.
6. The funeral must provide sense of finality.
7. The funeral must be an aid in recalling memories of the deceased.
8. The funeral is to establish a climate for mourning.
9. The funeral must be sensitive to the individual needs of the bereaved, dynamic, variable, in both form and content.⁸⁴

Bachmann deals with five aspects of the funeral.

1. Funerals satisfy personal needs. Bachmann says the

⁸³Ibid., p. 23.

⁸⁴Irion, op. cit., pp. 86-87 and 133-137.

funeral becomes the means of expressing sorrow in a direct way. It gives the grief sufferer opportunity to vent his feelings in a manner socially acceptable to those who are most concerned. It is an essential concern of pastoral care, that the family's needs be taken into consideration as far as the content of the service. The pastor must know the personal history of his parishioners in order to understand these personal needs.⁸⁵

2. The funeral is a vague overexpression of loss. The funeral aids in the process of dealing with the problem of death in a realistic way and provides a climate of mourning which has a therapeutic significance.⁸⁶

3. The funeral is a learning experience for the survivors in the community and the church. Bachmann says that the Christian religion is beginning to teach that there are no short cuts to the acceptance of loss and the attempts to delay the denial of grief are done with grave peril. Thus, every funeral service teaches the survivors and others on the fringe of this experience of death, the finiteness of man - that he is limited and that he only has a transitory existence.⁸⁷

4. The funeral provides the community the opportunity to express its concern. Grief sufferers need more than sympathy, they need empathetic care and someone to stand by in their distress. The funeral by its fellowship of concern helps in

⁸⁵Bachmann, op. cit., pp. 85-87.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 87.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 88.

this empathy and in this sharing of sorrow.⁸⁸

5. The funeral is a learning experience for the pastor. The pastor, if he is alert to and aware of human needs, personalizes a funeral service so that a grief sufferer knows that not only is he trying to give assurance of life after death, but also that he is in the struggle with him. Thus, Bachmann says that a person should grow in his own abilities to deal with bereavement with every funeral.⁸⁹

In evaluating Bachmann's points as well as Irions, it must be noted that these suggestions are in the context of the Christian religion particularly when the reference is to life after death as well as the Christian community. Judaism, although it does not deny the possibility of life after death has never stressed this in its philosophy. There also may be a danger of one going overboard in stressing life after death instead of empathizing with the sorrow that is present here in life.

Summary and Conclusions

Surveying the material on modern grief therapy, it appears that taking into account all the various rules and suggestions concerning the therapy of bereavement, five major principles appear evident. Although many people may put these laws in many different ways, these main themes seem to run

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 89.

⁸⁹Ibid., pp. 89-90.

through most of the works that we have cited.

The first principle of grief therapy is that one must face the reality of death. This theme is expressed in many different ways in the survey. Spiro maintains that "one must have a realistic attitude toward death." Freud underlines the same theme when he advocates grief work to break the attachment to the dead. Bachmann has three similiar points; namely, facts need to be faced, pain and loss need to be accepted, and there must be a need for assimilation of the fact of loss in daily living. Rogers also uses the term actualizing loss when he really is saying facing the reality of death. Whitman, in his second point of not diverting the bereaved also seems to be saying that one must face reality. Rabinowicz and Jackson also state that one has to face the reality of death.

The second basic principle is, deep feelings, including negative ones, must be expressed. Throughout the previous pages, it was noted that Liebmann in his admonition to express as much grief as possible, or Spiro when he says "express the deepest feelings" really echo what Lindemann states when he describes an open expression of grief. Irion stresses the idea of talking as a cathartic, and Rogers writes about expressing a sorrow. Whitman emphasizes the idea of "letting them talk" and Bachmann points out that feelings must be verbalized.

It is especially important that negative feelings be expressed. These negative feelings include anger, resentment, and guilt. It was noted above in citing Rogers (p. 23) that

the bereaved will need to verbalize hostility. It was stated that a person has many ambivalent feelings toward his loved ones and that ventilation is needed to aid in the clarification of the meaning of guilt feelings. Lindemann also marks the necessity of verbalizing guilt feelings. Clinebell, in a lecture at the School of Theology at Claremont, mentioned that in counseling the bereaved, one must consider negative feelings that the bereaved might have. There might be resentment about a loved one's leaving. There might be anger against God. He also stressed the verbalization of guilt feelings about prior relationships with the deceased. These negative and conflicting feelings tend to block "grief work" which Lindemann defines as the emancipation from the bondage of the deceased, readjustment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships.

The third major principle of grief distilled from the previous pages is the maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships. This point is the same as replacing an old relationship with the new one. Rogers says it explicitly when he says that one must have support from others. Rabinowicz says that there must be interaction within the community. Whitman's point of "don't desert them, and not isolating them" falls under this third category. Bachmann puts it very well when he stresses the need for protective layers such as support from closely knit families or strong solidarity with a social, cultural or ethnic group. The need for a community grief anonymous also supports

this third law of grief. Jackson's mention of the importance of the pastor maintaining contact, would also fall in this area.

The fourth major principle of grief is the need to be needed. The only person who states this explicitly is Bachmann in his tenth and final point. At first glance it seems to be an integral part of grief law number three - that of maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships. In other words, it is implied that one is needed by others in a relationship of support and protection. However, there is a possibility that a person may be needed without having an active interpersonal relationship such as a painter who continued a great work of art because he may feel that the world needs it. In other words, it appears that the fourth has a little different thrust than the third. Likewise the emphasis is not on support, but rather on making the person feel that he has something to give rather than making him feel that he is the object of giving.

The final principle of grief is the need for some type of culturally sanctioned action. This is the need to do something in a constructive or socially accepted way. Spiro states it when he says that one must do the right things, i.e., culturally sanctioned things. Bachmann more or less makes the same point when he says that the pastor can help the individual grief sufferer explore alternate courses of action in order that a plan may be formulated for his future. Whitman's ninth and tenth points of "swinging into action," such as helping your friend

with his hobby or at work or "getting them out of themselves" such as having a friend do things for himself until his grief is nearly "cured," are examples of this fifth principle of grief.

To be sure, these five laws of grief can be expressed in many ways, perhaps can even be further sub-divided. Nevertheless, these five main principles of grief therapy seem to be the sum and substance about which what modern grief experts have been writing. These five principles will be used as guide lines for the analysis of traditional Jewish mourning to see whether the age old patterns of Jewish customs and law can have modern meaningful expression and if they stand up to the latest findings in grief therapy.

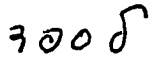
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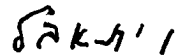
TRADITIONAL JEWISH MOURNING

Expressions of grief in Jewish tradition are found early in the Bible. The richness of Hebrew allows for many subtle distinctions in describing mourning. These distinctions unfortunately, often are lost when translated into English.

For example, there are two passages in Genesis which in English appear to have the same meaning. In Genesis 23:2 it is written that Abraham, "proceeded to mourn for Sarah and to bewail her."¹

In Genesis 37:34, Jacob when seeing Joseph's blood stained tunic, "...rent his clothes, put sack cloth on his loins and observed mourning for his son many days."²

In the first verse, the Hebrew word is  Lispod which has the connotation of beating one's breast, an action much more dramatic than the mere term "mourn."

The second verse cited has the Hebrew word  Vayitabel which has the meaning of "showing oneself as a mourner," and in a sense, intimates a refusal to be comforted.

In Job 30:28 it is written, "I go mourning without the

¹The Torah (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), p. 37.

²Ibid., p. 69.

sun, I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help.³ The word for mourning in this verse is קָדַר Koder. Koder denotes the idea of being blackened. Robert Gordis in The Book of God and Man, a study of Job, renders the verse, "I walk about blackened but not by the sun. . . ."⁴ The Revised Standard Version also translates the verse, "I go about blackened. . . ."⁵

Another word that is translated at times, "mourn," is the Hebrew root נָחַם (Genesis 50:3) and the Egyptian mourned for him three score and ten days."⁶

Actually, the Hebrew has the meaning of "to weep" or "to wail." The new translation of the Jewish Publication Society is, "The Egyptian bewailed him seventy days."⁷

Likewise, there are translations which render Proverbs 5:11 in the following manner, "and thou mourn at the last, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed."⁸

³The Holy Scriptures (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1917), p. 952.

⁴Robert Gordis, The Book of God and Man (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), p. 283.

⁵The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version (Teaneck: Cokesbury, 1962), p. 463.

⁶The Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament (London: Low and Blydone Printers, Ltd., 1950), p. 86.

⁷The Torah, op. cit., p. 95.

⁸The Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 1090.

The Hebrew חנן Vn'hamtah can mean "moan" as in the J.R.S. translation, "and thou moan, when thy end cometh."⁹ Or groan as in the R.S.V., "And at the end of your life you groan."¹⁰

In Isaiah 51:11 the translation of אנח V'anachah is sometimes given as, ". . . sorrow and mourning shall flee away."¹¹ Actually אנח Anachah instead of being translated "mourning" should be rendered "sighing" as in the R.S.V. ". . . and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."¹²

The above are just a few examples of the many different Hebrew expressions for describing terms relating to mourning. Each has its own particular psychological nuance. There is a difference between sighing and beating one's breast just to note one example. Thus, it appears that the ancient Hebrews were well aware of the many "moods of mourning."

From Biblical times, Judaism developed a system of rituals which were designed to help meet the difficult shock of death. These rituals were enough detailed to speak on every minute part of burial and mourning. These rituals may be divided into two main categories; namely, rituals that took place

⁹The Holy Scriptures (J.P.S.) op. cit., p. 887.

¹⁰The Holy Bible: R.S.V., op. cit., p. 563.

¹¹The Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, op. cit., p. 722.

¹²The Holy Bible: RSV., p. 647.

before the burial and those that took place after the interment: According to the Shulhan Aruch, mourning actually began as soon as the decedent was buried and the grave was filled.¹³ It must be noted, however, that there were rituals that took place both before and after the interment such as wearing rent garments. However, for the sake of a natural division, the intering of the body will be used.

Pre-Burial Rituals

As soon as the person had died, the windows of the house were opened and the relatives recited the prayer Tsiduk Haddin.¹⁴ Gaster suggests the reason for opening the window in stating that people believed that it allowed the soul to exit.¹⁵ Gaster also intimates that the window was closed immediately lest the soul return and "harass" the family of the deceased.¹⁶

Another custom at death was the pouring out of the water in the home.¹⁷ The explanations given for the pouring out of the water were twofold; the first was that this act announced

¹³Soloman Ganzfried, Code of Jewish Law (Trans. by Hyman E. Goldin, New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1961), Vol. 4, Chapter 204.

¹⁴Hyman E. Goldin (ed.), Hamadrikh, The Rabbi's Guide (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1939), p. 109.

¹⁵Theodore H. Gaster, The Holy and the Profane (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1955), p. 158.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Hayyim Schauss, The Lifetime of A Jew (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1950), p. 262.

that a death had taken place, and the second, "that the Angel of Death cleansed his dripping knife in water, and that therefore all water must be poured out in order to prevent the spread of death."¹⁸

After death, the corpse was watched. The person watching the dead one was exempt from saying prescribed prayers and from observing any precepts of Jewish law.¹⁹ The people watching the corpse were forbidden to eat or drink anything in the same room.²⁰ They were enjoined to recite verses from the Psalms.²¹ Rabinowicz states that the custom of watching the body might have been due to fear of body snatchers or rodents. He suggests, however, that the probable explanation is that it is disrespectful to leave a body unattended.²² Spiro maintains that the real purpose was to "prevent evil demons from hurting the body." If the corpse were hurt then in anger it would punish those who failed to protect it.²³

The Biblical statement, "as he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he go back as he came,"²⁴ was the source of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ganzfried, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ H. Rabinowicz, A Guide to Life (London: Jewish Chronicle Publications, 1964), p. 22.

²² Ibid., p. 21.

²³ Jack D. Spiro, "A Time to Mourn: Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism," (Unpublished D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College. Jewish Institute of Religion), p. 129.

²⁴ Eccl. V:14.

the ritual washing and purification (Taharah) of the corpse. Rabinowicz quotes Sepher Ha-Chassidim (650) on this point by saying, "When man is born he is washed and when he dies he is washed."²⁵

The entire body was washed with warm water. The washing started from the head and continued downward. After the body was cleansed, it was placed in a standing position which nine rabbim (measures) of water were poured over it. Afterwards the body was dried.²⁶ Spiro mentions that the washing, "was a means of removing impurity from the body, which was the same as the removal of the demons and spirits inhabiting the body."²⁷

After the body had undergone the ritual purification, it was clothed in shrouds known as "tachrichim." The tachrichim were made of fine white linen²⁸ although at one time, they could be either black or white.²⁹

For the male, the garments were patterned after the high priests vestments which he wore upon entering the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.³⁰ The shrouds were made of three garments or more, and they usually consisted of a shirt,

²⁵Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 39.

²⁶Goldin, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

²⁷Spiro, op. cit., p. 128.

²⁸Goldin, op. cit., p. 118.

²⁹Gaster, op. cit., p. 138.

³⁰Ibid.

breeches, and an overgarment with a girdle. No hems or knots were allowed when making the shrouds or when attiring the deceased.³¹ One of the reasons that has been given for having no knots is that the exit of the soul and the dissolution of the body will not be impeded.³²

It was also customary to wrap a man in a tallit (prayer shawl) that had been rendered ritually unfit.³³ It was made unfit by removing one of the corner fringes to indicate that the garment was being worn only as a "robe of honor," and that it was not following the Biblical Verse to "make unto thee twisted cords on the four corners of thy covering wherewith thou coverest thy self." (Deut. 22:12) The tallit on the deceased was also likened to the robes of glory which the righteous were to wear in the next world.³⁴

Jewish tradition did not want to introduce distinctions between the rich and poor and therefore insisted upon simple vestments for the deceased. Ever since Rabban Gamaliel, who set an example by requesting to be buried in plain white linen garments, Judaism has stressed this simplicity.³⁵ The Talmud

³¹Goldin, op. cit., p. 118.

³²Gaster, op. cit., p. 139.

³³Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 197, p. 98.

³⁴Gaster, op. cit., p. 139.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 139-140.

refers to this event in the following passage:

Formerly the (expense of) taking the dead out (to his burial) fell harder on his near-of-kin than his death so that the dead man's near-of-kin abandoned him and fled, until at last Rabban Gamaliel came (forward) and, disregarding his own dignity, came out (to his burial) in flaxen vestments and thereafter the people followed his lead to come out (to burial) in flaxen vestments. Said R. Papa, and nowadays all the world follow the practice of (coming out) even in a paltry (shroud) that costs but a zuz.³⁶

The taharah and dressing of the corpse, as well as all other details concerning burial, were under the supervision of the Chevrah Kadisha or burial society.

Only males over the age of thirteen were allowed to be official members, but children could be classified as contributing members. Wealthy members of the community would enroll their children into the Chevrah at the time of their birth so important did they consider its place in the community.³⁷

Women formed their own societies to take care of washing the dead. These women who belonged to these societies were called, "Nashim Zadkanyot" or pious women. Different duties, such as washing the body and attiring it in shrouds, were assigned according to the age and standing of the members. For example, the president of the society had the privilege of putting on the linen cap on the head of the corpse.³⁸ Thus, it appeared that

³⁶I. Epstein, The Babylonian Talmud, 34 Volumes (London: Soncino Press, 1935-52), Mo'ed Katan 27 b.

³⁷Isidore Singer, (ed.) The Jewish Encyclopedia 12 Volumes (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1961), Vol. 6, p. 299.

³⁸Ibid.

membership in the Chevra Kadisha was an honor and that people took their duties seriously.

Even though the Chevra Kadisha concerned itself with most of the details of the burial arrangements, the Onan (any person who has lost a relative for whom he is bound to observe mourning rites is called an Onan until after the interment)³⁹ still had the responsibility of contacting and making arrangements with the Chevra Kadisha in order to facilitate matters. However, the Onan was exempt from all religious duties enjoined in Jewish law since he had to attend to the needs of the dead.⁴⁰ Therefore, the Onan is not obligated to pray or to put on phylacteries (tephiilin) when eating bread, he did not have to make the blessing over it. He is not allowed to work, and only in a case where a great hardship was involved may he finish important business if it did not interfere with or delay the funeral arrangements.⁴¹ Even if directions were left that only one child concern himself with burial arrangements, the status of being an Onan fell on each one of the children.⁴² Thus, it is seen that the responsibility for fulfilling the obligations of an Onan and obscuring the duties of the period of aninut was incumbent upon all.

³⁹Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 196, p. 194.

⁴⁰Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 30.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 31.

⁴²Ibid., p. 33.

One of the necessary details for burial was the arrangement for a coffin. The coffin was very plain and tradition stated that it should be made of boards.⁴³ Metal nails were prohibited and there was to be no inside or outside lining. A simple flat board composed the cover.⁴⁴ In the early periods of Jewish history, people were buried without coffins but were carried to the burial place upon a Mittah (bed or bier).⁴⁵ As a matter of fact, interment without a coffin was followed by Orthodox Jews in Eastern Europe until modern times. In America and Western Europe, Orthodox Jews had reintroduced the coffin under pressure from local governments.⁴⁶

The use of a coffin or burial in the earth in Jewish tradition naturally precluded cremation. From the earliest of times Jews buried their dead in the ground. It is written in the Bible, ". . . for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return."⁴⁷

Jewish tradition traced the rite of burial from man's beginning. It relates how Adam and Eve were greatly upset when they did not know how to dispose of their son Abel's dead body.

⁴³Ganzfried, op. cit., Chap. 199, p. 103.

⁴⁴Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 41.

⁴⁵Isadore Singer, op. cit., Vol. 4, p. 143.

⁴⁶Schauss, op. cit., p. 251.

⁴⁷Genesis 3:19.

They then noticed a raven scratch earth away and bury a dead bird in the ground. "In a like manner Adam dealt with his son."⁴⁸

Rabinowicz quotes the Roman historian Tacitus (55-120 B. C.E.) as offering further evidence that burial was a traditional Jewish method. Tacitus wrote, "They (the Jews) bury rather than burn their dead."⁴⁹

Even though burning was one of the penalties prescribed in the Bible such as the stoning and burning of Achen and his family,⁵⁰ the rabbis did not take this penalty literally as they did not want to see the body destroyed. The Mishnah, in describing the carrying out of the death penalty by burning, says that a "wick was kindled and thrown into his mouth and it went down to his stomach and burnt his entrals."⁵¹ Danby quotes the Gemara Sanhedrin 52a in stating that instead of being a wick it was a strip of lead.⁵²

Another aspect of this opposition to cremation was the belief in resurrection as one of the principles of Judaism. The Midrash states that the resurrection of the body will be

⁴⁸ Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 25.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁰ Joshua 7:25.

⁵¹ Herbert Danby, The Mishnah (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 391.

⁵² Ibid.

from a bone of the spinal column:

R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Jehozadak: Even the nut of the spinal column, from which the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause man to blossom forth in the future,⁵³ (footnote 5 states "at the resurrection") was dissolved.⁵³

Just as cremation was opposed by Judaism so was the act of embalming. Rabinowicz cites the only two cases recorded in the Bible that of Jacob and Joseph (Genesis 50:2, 50:26) and then quotes the Midrash, which said that Joseph died before his brethren because he embalmed his father (Gen. Rabbah 100.2), as proof that embalming was contrary to Jewish practice.⁵⁴

The prohibition against embalming also related to not leaving the body remaining overnight. The Shulhan Aruch cites Deutronomey 21:23, "His body shall not remain all night. . . . but thou shalt surely bury him the same day."⁵⁵ The idea of a quick burial also may have had its origin due to the hot climate in the Near East.⁵⁶

Nevertheless, burial could be delayed if one had to "provide a coffin, or shrouds, or to await the arrival of relatives or of an orator to deliver the funeral oration."⁵⁷

⁵³H. Friedman and Maurice Simon (ed.), The Midrash (London: Soncino Press, 1951), Leviticus-Rabbah 28:3.

⁵⁴Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵⁵Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 198, p. 101.

⁵⁶Gaster, op. cit., p. 169.

⁵⁷Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 198, p. 101.

The Shulhan Aruch intimates that the burial can be delayed for his honor.⁵⁸

In regards to the funeral oration or eulogy that was mentioned above, it can be assumed that since the oration was one of the things mentioned that honored the dead, the purpose of the eulogy was to praise the deceased. In addition to this purpose, the eulogy was also used to make people cry. Often, the funeral orator was a professional whose main goal was to break the heart.⁵⁹

It is also interesting to note that not only were professional orators employed to encourage crying, but that professional mourners or wailers were also used.⁶⁰

Another custom that took place before the actual burial was the rending or cutting (Keriah) of clothes. This rent had to be made for the loss of a relative for whom one was required to mourn.⁶¹ For a mother or father, the rent was on the left side while for all other relatives, it was made on the right.⁶² The rite of Keriah had to be performed while standing. If it was performed while sitting then one did not fulfill the

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Spiro, op. cit., p. 175.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 176.

⁶¹ Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 195, p. 91.

⁶² Goldin, op. cit., p. 113.

requirement.⁶³ The Shulhan Aruch cites II Samuel 13:31: "And the King arose and tore his garments" as the Biblical basis for standing during the Keriah.⁶⁴ The appropriate time for performing the Keriah was before the coffin was closed. This was a time when the mourner's sorrow was most pronounced.⁶⁵

During the actual Keriah the following blessing was recited, "Blessed art thou, O Lord Our God, Ruler of the Universe, who art the Righteous Judge."⁶⁶

It was customary to join in the procession to the cemetery. A longer route was followed in order to enable as many people as possible to join the procession.⁶⁷ Gaster cites as a precedent the "Biblical statement that when Joseph brought up the bones of his Father Jacob from Egypt to Canaan, he did not travel by a direct route but made a point of going first to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan. (Genesis 50:10.)"⁶⁸ Every Jew had a duty when he saw a procession to symbolically join it by taking a few steps in its direction.⁶⁹

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ganzfried, loc. cit.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Isador Signer (ed.), Rabbinical Assembly Manual (Philadelphia: Maurice Jacobs, Inc., 1952), p. 105.

⁶⁷Gaster, op. cit., p. 144.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.

When the coffin was borne to the grave it was a custom to stop seven times and to weep over the dead.⁷⁰ The seven steps represent the seven times the word Hevel (vanity) occurs in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Other reasons given were that the number seven corresponded to the days of the world's creation and to the seven stages which man experiences in his lifetime.⁷¹

The dead were buried with their feet toward the east reputedly in order to rise in the position dictated by prayer.⁷² After the coffin was lowered, those in attendance would say, "May he (she) come to his (her) place in peace."⁷³ It was then a custom for everyone present to empty three spadefuls or handfuls of earth on the coffin.⁷⁴ These three shovelfuls of dirt were supposed to symbolize the "three-fold composition of man: soul, spirit, and breath."⁷⁵ When the shovel was finished being used by the individual, it was not to be passed to the next man but rather it was to be put back on the ground. The reason for not passing it on was that it should not appear that one man was passing on trouble to another. Likewise, the passing of the spade from one to another might indicate a master servant relationship which was not in keeping with the presence

⁷⁰Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 50.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Gaster, op. cit., p. 147.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 50.

of death.⁷⁶

The cemetery in which the burial took place was given many euphemistic names such as Bet Hayyim (House of Life) and Bet Olam (House of Eternity).⁷⁷ The location for the cemetery was usually as remote as was convenient from the town.⁷⁸ Rabinowicz maintains that it was difficult to ascertain from the Bible whether there was any one type of burial place.⁷⁹ The Bible seems to prefer a burial in family plots or caves. Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah for his family sepulchre. (Genesis 23:19) However, other varieties of resting places were mentioned such as the time when Manasseh was buried in the garden of his own house. (II Kings 21:18); Amon, in the garden of Uzza (II Kings 21:26); Deborah, Rebecca's nurse, under an oak tree (Genesis 35:8); Saul under a Terebinth tree (I Chron. 10:12); and Rachel on the road near Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19).⁸⁰

During Talmudic times, "burial took place in caves, stone tombs, sarcophagis and catacombs."⁸¹ The cemeteries were taken care of quite well and it was reputed that they were quite beautiful.⁸² After the Jews were dispersed, communal Jewish

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 50-51.

⁷⁷Singer, op. cit., p. 636.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 44.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 45.

⁸²Ibid.

cemeteries came into existence although it was often hard for Jews to have their own cemeteries. If the Jews could not obtain their own exclusive cemetery, they would be forced to leave burial plots from non-Jews. If such an arrangement were made, then the Jews would separate the Jewish section from the rest of the cemetery.⁸³

Post-Burial Practices

When the coffin was covered with earth and the service completed, those present would form two rows. The mourners would pass through and those attending would recite the following: "May the Omnipresent comfort you together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."⁸⁴ Upon leaving the cemetery, it was a custom to pluck some grass and earth and throw them behind one's back.⁸⁵ While doing this, it was customary to recite Psalm 103:14, "He remembereth that we are dust." This custom also symbolized resurrection as it is written Psalm 72:16, "And may they blossom out of the city like grass of the earth."⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that flowers were never sprinkled or placed on a grave according to Jewish tradition. The reason being that flowers played a leading part

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁸⁴ Goldin, op. cit., p. 134.

⁸⁵ Spiro, op. cit., p. 132.

⁸⁶ Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 199, p. 104.

in ancient people's idolatrous rites. Thus, putting flowers on the grave was regarded as a pagan custom and discouraged by rabbinic authorities.⁸⁷

Before entering the house after the funeral, it was necessary that one wash his hands.⁸⁸ The Shulhan Aruch mentions the fact that water poured from a vessel is required and that the hands should not be wiped.⁸⁹ Gaster claims that death was considered a contagion and that the hands were not wiped by a towel lest the impurity cling to it.⁹⁰

When the family returned home after the funeral service, they entered a period known as Shivah (literally seven).⁹¹ One reason for the number seven was that it corresponded to a tenth of a man's allotted span of three score and ten.⁹² Another reason for the number seven was the Biblical phrase referring to Miriam which said, "Let him not, I pray, be as one dead. . .

⁸³Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁸⁴Goldin, op. cit., p. 134.

⁸⁵Spiro, op. cit., p. 132.

⁸⁶Ganzfried, op. cit., Chapter 199, p. 104.

⁸⁷Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 52.

⁸⁸Spiro, op. cit., p. 134. ⁸⁹Ganzfried, loc. cit.

⁹⁰Gaster, op. cit., p. 175.

⁹¹Morris N. Kertzer, What Is A Jew (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1953), p. 95.

⁹²Singer, op. cit., p. 101.

and Miriam was shut up without the camp seven days."⁹³

During this Shivah period, the family would sit on low stools. Those obligated to sit were the immediate members of the family, the children, parents, brothers and sisters and spouse of the deceased.⁹⁴

The aspects of the Shivah were designed to unite the mourner's in common sorrow by having everyone undergo certain rituals.

One of the first rituals was the Seudat Havra'ah, or meal of consolation. Friends and neighbors traditionally provided this meal in deference to the Talmudic injunction that a mourner was forbidden to eat his own food after burial. (Moed Katan, 27b).⁹⁵ Thus, it is seen that one of the rites of mourning was to allow others to provide food and not to eat of one's own provisions.

The traditional menu for the meal was hard boiled eggs and bread. The egg had a special symbolism since it represented life and resurrection. Likewise, since the egg was sealed under a shell it reminded the mourners to be silent when they were tempted to engage in casual conversation.⁹⁶ Bread was used because it has always been the basic food in Jewish life.

⁹³Numbers 12:12, 15.

⁹⁴Kertzer, op. cit., p. 96.

⁹⁵Rabinowicz, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 58.

Lentils were also served since they were made into a broth by Jacob to comfort his father when Abraham died. Other reasons were given for the use of lentils, which had to do with there being round like a wheel (mourning is like a revolving wheel that touches everyone at one time or another) and that they had no "mouths" (so too, mourners have no mouths and they are forbidden to greet people).⁹⁷

During the Shivah period it was a custom in some homes to cover all the mirrors.⁹⁸ This practice came from the ancient fear that "the dead might be confused by his own image and remain in the house."⁹⁹

It also became a requirement to light a candle for the entire Shivah period.¹⁰⁰ The purpose was to keep the demons and evil spirits away since they are incapable of operating except in the dark.¹⁰¹

During the Shivah period, not only would the mourners sit on low stools but they would wear slippers of felt or cloth and not put on regular footwear.¹⁰² They were also forbidden to greatly concern themselves with personal appearances by

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

⁹⁸ Spiro, op. cit., p. 135.

⁹⁹ Kertzer, op. cit., p. 97.

¹⁰⁰ Spiro, loc. cit.

¹⁰¹ Gaster, op. cit., p. 167.

¹⁰² Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 60.

using cosmetics or by bathing all over.¹⁰³

Mourners were not supposed to leave their home except to attend services in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Since they were not supposed to leave, services were held in the home. During these services the Kaddish was recited with a minyan (quorum of ten men). The Kaddish, an Aramaic prayer, does not refer to death in any way.¹⁰⁴ The translation is as follows:

Mourners' Kaddish

Magnified and sanctified be the name of God throughout the world which He hath created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom during the days of your life and during the life of all the house of Israel, speedily yea, soon; and say ye, Amen.

Congregation and Mourners

May His great name be blessed for ever and ever.

Mourners

Exalted and honored be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, whose glory transcends, yea, is beyond all praises, hymns and blessings that man can render unto Him; and say ye, Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life for us and for all Israel; and say ye, Amen.

May He who establisheth peace in the heavens, grant peace unto us and unto all Israel; and say ye, Amen.¹⁰⁵

The Kaddish was recited three times a day during the

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁰⁴ Kertzer, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁰⁵ Morris Silverman (ed.), Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1946) p. 39.

eleven month period of the year of mourning as well as on the Yahrzeit or yearly anniversary of the death of the deceased.¹⁰⁶ (A memorial candle was also kindled).¹⁰⁷ The Kaddish was also recited during the special memorial services (Yizkor) held four times a year.¹⁰⁸

The erection of a tombstone was also a Jewish practice. It was the custom in many communities not to put up this stone until after twelve months since within twelve months the deceased was still mourned.¹⁰⁹ Another reason given for the twelve month period was that a tombstone was erected so that the dead would not be forgotten. It was thought that the dead were not forgotten within twelve months.¹¹⁰ Other communities, on the other hand, paid no attention to the twelve month period.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Rabinowicz, op. cit., p. 80.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁰⁹ Ganzfried, op. cit., p. 105.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Summary

From the preceding pages, it is quite evident that Jewish mourning customs are many and varied. The above have merely been some of the highlights of Jewish mourning practices which have in some degree continued in Orthodox circles down to our own day. There are many subtle variations which were lost in the centuries of Jewish history, but the broad mainstream of Jewish mourning practices still flows with some depth in certain quarters. The next task will be to relate these traditional Jewish mourning practices to the insights of modern grief therapy.

CHAPTER III

HOW TRADITIONAL JEWISH PRACTICES MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL MOURNING IN THE MODERN CONTEXT

In the first chapter, five major principles of grief therapy were expounded namely:

1. The need of facing the reality of death.
2. The expression of deep feelings including negative feelings.
3. The maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships.
4. The need to be needed.
5. The need for some type of culturally sanctioned action.

In the second chapter, there was a brief survey of the various mourning rituals of traditional Judaism outlining those acts and customs which have been enforced throughout the mainstream of Jewish life. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter will be to analyze various laws of Jewish mourning to see how relevant they are in regard to the five major principles of grief, and to see if they fulfill the criteria for successful grief therapy.

Before analyzing these various rituals perhaps, it might be wise to generalize how traditional Judaism felt about one particular principle of grief namely, that of expressing deep

feelings, especially negative feelings.

It is quite explicit in the Bible that deep feelings were to be expressed. The following five verses from Jeremiah clearly indicate that wailing and lamenting were to be expected under conditions of mourning:

- 16 Thus saith the Lord of hosts:
Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come:
And send for the wise women, that they may come;
- 17 And let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us,
That our eyes may run down with tears,
And our eyelids gush out with waters.
- 18 For a voice of wailing is heard out of Zion:
'How are we undone!
We are greatly confounded, because we have forsaken the land,
Because our dwellings have cast us out.'
- 19 Yea, hear the word of the Lord,
O ye women,
And let your ear receive the word of His mouth,
And teach your daughters wailing,
And every one her neighbour lamentation:
- 20 'For death is come up into our windows,
It is entered into our palaces,
To cut off the children from the street,
And the young men from the broad places.--' (Jeremiah Chapter 9)

Not only were deep feelings expressed, but Judaism also allowed for negative feelings of anger and resentment. In the Psalms, there are written the following words of resentment:

- 2 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me,
And art far from my help at the words of my cry?

- 3 O my God, I call by day, but Thou
answerest not;
And at night, and there is no sur-
cease for me. . .
- 16 My strength is dried up like a pot
sherd;
And my tongue cleaveth to my
throat;
And Thou layest me in the dust of
death.' (Psalm, Chapter 22)

The bitter feelings of Job are well known:

- Then Job answered and said:
- 2 'Even to-day is my complaint
bitter;
My hand is become heavy because
of my groaning.
- 3 Oh that I knew where I might find
Him,
That I might come even to His
seat!
- 4 I would order my cause before Him
And fill my mouth with arguments.' (Job, Chapter 23)

Thus, it is seen that negative feelings, even against
God, had their place in Jewish tradition.

These examples lead one to conclude that the expression
of deep feelings, even though they might have strong negative
overtones, had some place in Jewish tradition. Nevertheless,
Judaism did not encourage the expression of negative feelings
during the mourning period, although it admitted they were there
and did not "punish" people for having these feelings. There-
fore, one of the contributions and additions of modern psycho-
logical understanding of bereavement to Judaism and other
religions is the importance of expressing these negative feelings.
It might even be that the emphasis on honoring and remembering
the deceased might lead to the repression of negative feelings

toward the deceased.

Returning to an analysis of the rituals themselves, the first ritual that was mentioned was the use of watchers (page 40). Watchers were used to see that the body was not left alone. On the surface there may be very little direct connection between the bereaved and this custom of watching the body since the bereaved themselves are at home while the body would be at the funeral home; nevertheless, it would fall under the area of culturally sanctioned action. The family feels that they have done something, i.e., instructed a person to be with the remains of their loved one. They have the satisfaction of knowing that this is required in Jewish tradition and they are fulfilling this requirement.

The Taharah (page 41) is much like the dynamics of the watchers. Although the mourners are not directly involved in the Taharah they have the satisfaction of knowing that this is a culturally sanctioned act.

When it comes to the Tachrichim or shrouds (page 41), there is a much more direct relationship to the mourner.

Tachrichim made from fine white linen are unlike anything that is worn during life. When the mourners see the loved ones in these shrouds they are made to realize that this person is really dead and thus fulfill the first principle of healthy mourning - facing the reality of death. The author remembers one incident when a woman who was looking at her husband in the shrouds remarked, "When I see him here in those white garments,

I finally realize that he is really gone."

In the previous chapter much was said about cremation (pages 45-46). It was stated the traditional Judaism was consistently opposed to cremation. It advocated burial in the ground. The idea of being buried in the ground has great psychological significance as far as facing the reality of death, the first law of grief therapy. If a body is merely taken away after the funeral service and is not seen being lowered in the ground, this deprives the family of actually seeing the remains of their loved ones being interred. There is nothing more realistic than having the coffin lowered and hearing the dirt on the top of the coffin. This act of burial also encourages the mourners to meet the requirement of the second basic principle of grief-that deep feelings must be expressed. As the author's experience has shown in hundreds of funerals that he has conducted, this lowering of the casket and this earth on top of the casket signals the beginnings of great expressions of deep feelings such as crying and wailing. In a great many cases people who remained generally stoic during the rest of the service would break down and cry at graveside.

The use of the plain coffin, also has its purpose in grief therapy. A plain wood coffin is a jarring sight. There is no aesthetic beauty to it, and there is no doubt as to its purpose. Thus, the plain coffin helps fulfill the first basic principle - facing the reality of death.

When it comes to the various laws of the Onan (page 44) we note that there are several duties that he must perform. Those duties would fall under the fifth principle - the need for culturally sanctioned action. There is also one specific duty which falls particularly on the Onan and that (page 44) is the approaching and making arrangements with the burial society as well as obtaining death and other certificates which may be required before the funeral can take place. In other words, the Onan is needed. Arrangements cannot be made without him. His decisions are necessary and vital. This being needed would match the fourth major principle of grief - the need to be needed.

Washing one's hands (page 53) after the return from the cemetery is another custom which stresses the reality of death. Covering the mirrors (page 55) and the rending of the garments (page 48) also fall into the first principle of grief - facing the reality of death and the fifth principle that of culturally sanctioned action.

The Chevrah Kadisha (page 43) is, as was noted in the previous chapter, an organization which concerns itself with the burial of the dead. Its task was not only to wash the body and clothe it, but also it had contact with the mourners in regards to all the details.¹ The Chevrah Kadisha also was

¹Jack D. Spiro, "A Time To Mourn: Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism" (Unpublished D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College. Jewish Institute of Religion).

responsible for seeing to it that there was a Minyan (quorum) or supply any other needs that the family may want.² The use of the Chevrah Kadisha in a mourning situation, although it functions in many areas, coincides with the third major principle of grief - namely, the maintaining and protecting of supporting relationships. The Chevrah Kadisha members would give their emotional support to the family during the periods of mourning. The Chevrah Kadisha would also support the requirement of the fifth major law of mourning which is some type of culturally sanctioned action. By the various rules and regulations which they observe, they give comfort to the mourner in the knowledge that Jewish law and tradition is being taken care of in culturally approved ways.

The use of the cemetery (page 51) instead of cremation relates to two of the major grief laws. By having the burial in a cemetery which is associated with death, the mourner must face the reality of death. Second, by having burial in a Jewish cemetery, the Jewish mourner is engaging in a culturally sanctioned action - he is meeting the requirement of the commandment to be buried in ground consecrated by ritual.

The idea of escorting the dead in a funeral procession (page 49) plays an important role in allowing the mourner to face the reality of death to perform an action, and also to give expression to his feelings. By having a certain amount of time

²Ibid., p. 218.

elapse between the service in the chapel, and the burial helps the idea of death all the more to be realized. Likewise, during the funeral procession the mourner has still another chance to express his feelings. The seven steps (page 50) also point up the reality of death and allow the fact to be realized in the minds of the mourners. The lowering of the casket and the shovelling of the dirt on the coffin have been dealt with above. Perhaps mention might be made of passing of the spade from one man to another. (page 50) This ritual is an example of a supporting relationship, the third major law of grief, in which friends are helping with the actual burial. It indicates that they too are sharing in the grief process by the distasteful task of shovelling dirt over the remains of a good friend or relative. Much more direct is when the family itself shovels the dirt. This helps them quite dramatically to face the reality of death and also at the same time to express deep feelings.

The author remembers one incident quite well:

Rabbi, the thing that I remember the most about the funeral was when I was told to grab the shovel and pour some dirt on Dad's coffin. It was very hard for me but I forced myself to do it. When I heard the thud of dirt on that coffin I knew that it was all over and all the wishful thinking about my Dad's coming back wasn't going to do me any good. At that time it seemed cruel to me but after thinking about it I'm glad I had the chance at least to do something. Yet, I finally realized that Dad wouldn't be coming back when I heard that dirt hit.

From the above, there are other overtones besides facing reality - namely, the need of doing some action and also perhaps the need to be needed, since he was the person who had to shovel

the dirt on the remains to complete the ceremony.

The custom of leaving the cemetery (page 52) having the mourners go through two rows illustrates the third major law of grief - maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships. It will be recalled that those present say to the mourners, "May the Almighty comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." Thus, the mourners are shown that they are passing among their friends, and the friends are offering words of comfort and support to them.

The custom of plucking grass by everyone is a culturally sanctioned action which provides comfort when leaving the grave. A grave without flowers also emphasizes the reality of death.

It was stated by Paul Irion in the first chapter (page 29) the funeral must be an aid in recalling memories of the deceased and establish a climate for mourning. The eulogy in Jewish tradition fulfills these purposes admirably. The purpose of the eulogy as was stated before (page 48) is to evoke emotion to cause people to cry and to express their deep feelings as well as to honor the deceased. It more than any other part of the funeral seems to allow for the expression of deep feelings, the second basic principle of grief. It allows the mourner to hear about the life of the deceased and to let him give vent to his emotions while hearing the words of the rabbi. The eulogy should also serve the first principle of grief therapy helping the mourners face the reality of death by speaking in direct and clear terms about the loss that the family and the community have

suffered. Many a Rabbi or minister has had the experience of having the family break out in crying during the eulogy when some particular point about the deceased was mentioned. Clergymen also notice when they are giving the eulogy that the mourners often shake their heads in agreement when something was said that reflected accurately what the deceased had stood for in life. The eulogy also serves to implement the third major principle of grief by promoting a strong solidarity with the rest of the community. It helps create a community grief anonymous as Bachmann states (page 33) by creating an emotional atmosphere of agreement as to the great depth of the loss in the community itself.

The Shivah, or the seven days of mourning, (page 53) helps to fulfill the requirements of several basic principles of mourning. First of all, by agreeing to mourn intensely for seven days the mourner is doing a type of culturally sanctioned action since he is doing something in an accepted way according to Jewish tradition. He also is serving the second requirement of expressing deep feelings during the Shivah period because he is coming into contact with a great many relatives and friends. Each of these contacts allows him to express his feelings about the deceased. He is literally forced to make some response or some comment, and this repetition helps him to express his deep feelings.

The third major principle that of maintaining and

supporting relationships, is also exemplified because he is receiving support from the community. By their visiting him, they indicate to him that they are one with his grief. A specific example of this is the meal of consolation (page 54). It was indicated in a previous chapter that one of the rites of mourning was to allow others to provide food and not to eat of ones own provisions. Thus, the community of friends is providing one of the basic needs of the mourner namely sustaining him with nourishment.

The fourth major principle of grief, the need to be needed, is subtly met by the Shivah. The rest of the community needs mourners to express their own grief. The mourning family is the focus for the community's attention. They are the living symbol of the deceased to the rest of the community. Without the survivors the community would not be able to express their own feelings as deeply or as meaningfully.

A short time ago the author met a person who had just lost his father. He was describing how he had had to go back to New York for the funeral and participate in the Shivah. The idea of sitting at home and greeting all the friends had not particularly appealed to him as he had been estranged from his father and felt a littly guilty about coming back at that time. However, he remarked that the only benefit that he had seen from the Shivah was allowing the father's friends to come to him and express their deep feelings of regret. He felt that he had served the purpose of helping them grieve. He explained, that in a sense,

he had felt needed in that he had felt that he had done a good deed even though on the surface he maintained that he didn't feel as strongly as some of his father's friends had felt about his father's passing.

During the Shivah period it was mentioned above (page 55) that a candle must burn continuously. This candle serves the purpose of facing the reality of death by indicating to the person that there has been a loss.

The custom of sitting on low stools (page 55) also indicates the reality of death as this is not a normal custom for most people. The wearing of slippers of cloth felt or rubber was different as well as tiring and again brings home the point of facing the reality of death. The idea that one cannot bathe properly (page 55), or use any cosmetics (page 56) again served the purpose of having one face the reality of death by changing one's regular living habits.

The custom of having services held in the house of the mourner (page 56) is another excellent implementation of the third principle of grief - the maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships. This Minyan or service is held three times a day in the home of the mourners and illustrates Whitman's point of not deserting the mourners and not isolating them. (page 33) The person feels that he is not uttering his prayers alone but has at least a Minyan (a religious quorum of ten) to help him utter the approved prayers. The Minyan also

helps fulfill the fourth principle of allowing the person to perform a culturally sanctioned action. By leading the services or by participating in them, a mourner is doing something in an accepted manner.

Recitation of the Kaddish (page 56) falls under the fifth principle of grief, that of a culturally sanctioned action, and the third, the maintaining of supporting relationships since the Kaddish is only said in a Minyan. The recitation also helps face the reality of death since every time one says Kaddish, one is reminded that he is saying Kaddish simply because a person whom he has loved is no longer with him. Kaddish as was stated above (page 56) must be said by the mourner three times a day. Thus, for three formal periods during the mourner's day, he is forced to face this reality of death in a culturally approved way and be part of a supporting group.

The periods of mourning that were mentioned (page 57) allow one to face the reality of death over an extended period and also give vent to the expression of feelings, particularly negative ones, over an extended period as well as doing a culturally approved action. A specified mourning period allows plenty of time for the grief wound to heal. The draining of his grief wound is of utmost importance. The mourner can express his grief in a way which would not be frowned upon by the community, since these are culturally approved actions for the seven days and for the thirty days and for the twelve months

and limit the mourning period. A traditional Jew would think that the person would be mourning excessively if he observed certain rituals beyond the seven or thirty days.

The Yahrzeit (page 57), or the yearly memorial, allows the Jew at culturally approved times to continue expressing his grief throughout his life in an approved manner. By again reciting the Kaddish during the evening, morning and afternoon services, by being called up to read the law on the sabbath before the Yahrzeit, by hearing the memorial prayer offered on this Sabbath as well as visiting the grave and lighting a candle, the mourner is expressing his grief, facing the reality of death, enjoying a protecting and supporting relationship with the community, and acting in a culturally sanctioned way. In a sense, it serves as yearly inoculations against a grief infection.

Memorial services (page 57) which are said four times during the year also serve the same purposes as was mentioned for the Yahrzeit. They have the additional advantage of having many mourners at the same service. Therefore, the mourner feels more of a sense of belonging in community supported atmosphere than perhaps even during the Yahrzeit services.

The Yizkor service at the memorial service allows the mourner to again express his grief by the very words of the prayer and by hearing his parents or loved ones name mentioned.

The erecting of a tombstone (page 57) allows the person

to take a culturally sanctioned action, to express his grief, and to face the reality of death. The tombstone allows the person to see a concrete emblem of the memory of his loved one.

Conclusion and Summary

From the previous pages, it appears that many Jewish mourning customs meet the requirements of modern grief therapy. A legitimate question is asked about the relevancy of all Jewish mourning practices to modern life. What criteria are there by which a rabbi can decide what to retain and what to reject?

The only answer that can be given is a pragmatic one. The rabbi should strive to incorporate those rituals that meet any of the "five principles" of grief therapy that can be performed in a practical manner in modern society and that the family will accept and appreciate.

For example, if the family is not Orthodox and does not appreciate or understand all the details of washing the body, then the ritual washing will be meaningless.

An example of a ritual that may be difficult to fulfill in modern society is the erection of the tombstone. With the trend toward memorial parks without tombstones (see below p. 93) it may be impossible to have the therapeutic effect of erecting a tombstone in memory of a loved one.

In summary, three criteria can be considered in regards to the use of certain mourning rituals.

1. Does the ritual comply with any of the five principles of healthy grief?
2. Is it practical to do in modern society?
3. Will it be appreciated by the family and friends of the deceased?

CHAPTER IV

HOW THE TRADITIONAL JEWISH FUNERAL HAS CHANGED UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

An attempt will be made in this chapter to analyze how the Jewish funeral has changed from its traditional practices. In order to ascertain these changes, a survey was made of Jewish funeral practices in two cities of the United States. The first city chosen was Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Wilkes-Barre is the county seat and principal city of Luzerne County in Pennsylvania. The first Jewish settlers came there in 1838 and the society was organized for occasional worship in 1840. In 1849, it dedicated its first synagogue under the auspices of Moses Strasser and Isaac Leaser of Philadelphia, and Samuel Isaacs of New York. In 1857, the community was incorporated as a Congregation B'nai B'rith.¹ Until 1872, Congregation B'nai B'rith was the only congregation in Wilkes-Barre, but in that year, the first efforts were made to unite the Orthodox Jews. In 1886, 1887 and 1902, three orthodox synagogues were formed.² With its 6,500 Jews, Wilkes-Barre is an important center of Jewish activity in northeastern Pennsylvania, reaching out to

¹Isadore Singer (ed.), The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1901), XII:522.

²Ibid.

more towns in the vicinity such as Plymouth, Pittston and Kingston. The makeup of the community consists of 50% Orthodox, 35% Conservative, and 15% Reform. Another unique aspect of Wilkes-Barre is that its Jewish population, as a whole, has been fairly constant. It is not a section of great mobility and very few new families come into that part of the country since its main industry, a declining one, is Anthracite coal. Thus, the community's Jewish patterns have remained fairly constant. Wilkes-Barre's Jewish community is also known as one which has been strongly Jewish oriented due to the fact that it has high synagogue attendance, full Jewish community activity, and has the best record of raising funds for the United Jewish Appeal (Federated Fund Raising) than any other city of its size.

Wilkes-Barre appears to be a microcosm of balanced Jewish observance which reflects, in a sense, traditional Judaism existing side-by-side in American culture. Vance Packard, in his book, The Status Seekers, mentions Wilkes-Barre as having one of the finest records in the brotherhood.³ It is large enough to give us a feeling of a pattern in practices, yet not too large to make an adequate survey. It has the advantage of being an organic unit unlike a larger city whose practices might vary from section to section, i.e., a very Orthodox part of New York City such as certain parts of Brooklyn. Wilkes-Barre Jews are spread out through the town and there is no

³Vance Packard, The Status Seekers (New York: McKay, 1959), p. 282.

particularly Jewish section to be found.

The other city which will be used for a discussion of current Jewish mourning practices is the city of Los Angeles. In a sense, Los Angeles is everything that Wilkes-Barre is not. It is a highly mobile city with a great influx of Jews coming every year. It has not as yet established any particular patterns of Jewish observance. There is no sense of overall community tradition. The Jewish population is approximately 500,000 and it is the second largest Jewish city in the world, after New York, even surpassing Tel Aviv.⁴ The makeup of the religiously identifying community is approximately 50% Conservative, 35% Reform, and 15% Orthodox. Los Angeles is also chosen, because it is a megalopolis which could very well be the pattern of future Jewish urban growth, since more and more Jews are leaving the city confines and spreading out to the satellite cities and suburbs of our larger population centers.

Some thirty-three criteria were used to analyze how traditional Jewish funerals have changed under modern culture. Up until the emancipation, Jewish mourning practices were the same.⁵ Not until the advent of modern times have there been any great changes. Twenty-nine of these thirty-three criteria

⁴Harry Essrig and Abraham Segal, Israel Today (Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1964), p. 16.

⁵Jack D. Spiro, "A Time To Mourn: Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism" (Unpublished D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College. Jewish Institute of Religion), p. 210.

will deal with old Jewish practices; the rest will deal with practices from the general culture. These thirty-three mourning and funeral practices are a good descriptive cross-section to measure change.

The results of this survey are based on questions submitted to five funeral directors. Funeral directors offer an advantage in a survey of this type because they have complete and exhaustive records as far as certain rituals are concerned.

The four (only) funeral directors of Los Angeles were contacted. The choice was limited in Wilkes-Barre to the one practicing funeral director in that city. The Los Angeles directors were questioned in personal interviews, while the funeral director in Wilkes-Barre was questioned by long distance telephone.

Since the sampling was small, no major generalizations can be made. These findings are suggestive not definitive.

The directors were asked the percentages that were followed of the thirty-three criteria listed below:

1. Watchers
2. Taharah (ritual cleaning of the body)
3. Tachrichim (shrouds)
4. Cremation
5. Plain coffin
6. Spilling of water
7. Covering of the mirrors

8. K'reah (rending of the clothes)
9. Chevrah Kadisha (burial society)
10. Buried in Jewish cemetery
11. Funeral processions by foot
12. Seven steps at gravesite
13. Lowering of the casket
14. Putting dirt on the casket
15. Mourners walking through two rows after burial
16. Plucking of grass from cemetery
17. Eulogy
18. Observing Shiva
19. Lighting candle
20. Sitting on low stools
21. Wearing bedroom slippers
22. Not caring about personal appearance
23. Services in house of mourners
24. Recitation of the Kaddish
25. Observance of Yahrzeit (yearly memorial)
26. Memorial services four times per year
27. Erecting tombstone

The next six criteria are not traditional criteria but are criteria which have been influenced by modern life.

28. Embalming
29. Display of flowers
30. Open casket during service
31. Open casket before and after service

32. Viewing the body before the service

33. Use of the family room before the service

An analysis will now be made of each of these thirty-three points in regard to the frequency of practice in Wilkes-Barre and Los Angeles, respectively.

1. Watchers: In Wilkes-Barre, 85% of all funerals have watchers. This is exactly the percentage of Orthodox and Conservative in the community. If one is Orthodox or Conservative, it is automatically assumed by the undertaker that he would want a watcher provided. In Los Angeles, the figure is 10%. However, there is a complication due to the fact that one Jewish funeral director automatically includes a watcher for the service and charges for it.

2. Taharah, ritual cleansing: Tahara is 85% in Wilkes-Barre, again corresponding to the number of Orthodox and Conservative Jews; in Los Angeles, the average is 22%, where Taharah is only done upon request of the bereaved family.

3. Tachrichim, shrouds: In Wilkes-Barre, there is again the same 85%. In Los Angeles, the figure is 20%.

4. Cremation: In Wilkes-Barre, the figure is 3%. In Los Angeles, 1% of all the Jews who die are cremated.

5. Plain coffin: When it comes to the "plain coffin," a note of explanation must be made. In traditional Judaism, there was just a plain, pine box. However, there are now boxes made of wood which conform to the Halacha, or traditional law, by not having any metal in them. In order to get a truer picture,

we will use both types - the plain wooden box and the more finished box - according to Jewish Halachic standards. In Los Angeles and in Wilkes-Barre, the number of users of the plain, unpainted box, is approximately one or two percent. When it comes to the more finished wooden box, the percentage is Wilkes-Barre 40%, and Los Angeles 25%. These figures show that in Wilkes-Barre 40% of all the funerals have fancy coffins with metal parts and in Los Angeles 75% have them.

6. Spilling of water after a funeral: It has been customary to wash one's hands at a faucet when leaving a ceremony or using a pitcher before entering the bereaved homes after a funeral. In Wilkes-Barre, 35% of mourners use the water, and in Los Angeles 3%.

7. Covering of mirrors: Mirrors are covered at the house of mourning in Los Angeles in about 4% of the homes. In Wilkes-Barre, the percentage is much higher, fully one-half, 50% of the homes follow this ritual.

8. K'reah, rending of garments: In Wilkes-Barre, fully 83% of the people involved in the funeral have some sort of K'reah, usually the cutting or rending of a black ribbon, symbolizing the rending of a garment. In Los Angeles, it is 65%.

9. Chevra Kadisha, burial society: In Wilkes-Barre, all of the Orthodox and Conservative Jews make use of the Chevra Kadisha which brings the percentage to 85%. In Los Angeles, the percentage drops to around 4% due to the fact that there are

only one or two of these burial societies in existence, and these are for the very old, strictly Orthodox synagogues.

10. Jewish cemeteries: All Jews buried in Wilkes-Barre are buried in a Jewish cemetery. When it comes to Los Angeles, it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of Jews who are buried in non-Jewish cemeteries. This is due to the fact that there are a great number of unaffiliated people in Los Angeles, and unlike a smaller community where everybody is known, there is no way of knowing who is of which religion. The only statistic we have is the fact that of all the people who are buried by Jewish morticians, the figure of burial in Jewish cemeteries, is 99%. This figure is rather meaningless for our purposes since a person who goes to a Jewish mortician will usually be buried in a Jewish cemetery. One notable exception is the fact that there are some Jews who are buried by Jewish morticians, but who prefer a prestigious cemetery such as Forest Lawn. This is particularly notable among the "movie set."

11. In Wilkes-Barre, only half of 1% of all funerals, is there a procession by foot. In Los Angeles, the percentage is negligible. It drops down to one-fourth of 1%.

12. Seven steps at the gravesite: The custom of stopping seven times is mentioned in Chapter II. It is interesting to note that in Wilkes-Barre, nobody stops seven times, but rather, three times. The percentage of those stopping three times is 85%. Even though it is not the exact number seven, nevertheless, there is some stopping and it should be considered

to be significant. In Los Angeles, there is no stopping three times but rather, seven times. (This change, apparently, is a local custom in Wilkes-Barre). The Los Angeles custom of stopping seven times is one half of one per cent.

13. Witnessing the lowering of the casket: In Wilkes-Barre, the local custom is that they lower the casket to ground level and put three shovels full of ground over it and a little grass, or crush flowers symbolically. There is no lowering into the ground. The percentage of witnessing the lowering of the casket in Los Angeles is around 20%.

14. Putting dirt on the casket: In Wilkes-Barre 50% of funerals have three shovels full of dirt, at least, placed on the casket. In Los Angeles, the figure is 15%.

15. Mourners walking through two rows of the cemetery: 85% of the mourners in Wilkes-Barre pass through two rows as they leave the cemetery. In Los Angeles, 20% of the mourners pass through two rows of people.

16. Plucking grass: In both Wilkes-Barre and Los Angeles, the ceremony of plucking grass at the cemetery appears to be on the decline for only about 5% in both cases still observe this ritual.

17. Eulogy: Of all the rituals that make up the pattern of mourning practices, only the eulogy scores 100% in both areas. Thus, it appears that no matter how Reform or Orthodox the families may be, the eulogy is a sine qua non during the funeral service. As a matter of fact, in many strict highly

Orthodox communities, there are often three or four eulogys given.⁶

18. The Shivah: (immediate mourning period) in Wilkes-Barre, fully 85% of all mourners observe some sort of Shivah period whether it be seven days or the shortened form of three days. The three day period was instituted lest there be a loss on one's livelihood by not being able to go to work.⁷ In Los Angeles the figure is 65%.

19. In Wilkes-Barre 85% of the people, again the Orthodox and Conservative groups, utilize a candle that burns for seven days. It is interesting to note that in Los Angeles 95% of the people use the candle. The reason for this higher percentage in Los Angeles is that it is a custom of the funeral directors to give the candle to the people whether they ask for it or not, whereas in Wilkes-Barre it is given only upon request.

20. Low Stools: In Wilkes-Barre, once more there is the 85% figure. Low stools are provided by the funeral director upon request. In Los Angeles only 5% of the people utilize low stools since they are not available by the funeral establishments. When a family requests low stools, the funeral directors indicate to them that they can remove the pillows from the sofa

⁶Conversation with funeral director Alvin Malinow, Los Angeles, May 10, 1965.

⁷H. Rabinowicz, A Guide To Life (London: Jewish Chronicle, 1964), p. 66.

and sit on the flat surface.

21. In Wilkes-Barre, 70% of the mourners use bedroom slippers or go around in stockings. In Los Angeles, the figure is 5%.

22. Personal Appearances: The item on personal appearances relates to a person's concern about grooming during the Shiva period. In Wilkes-Barre, 50% of the people do not concern themselves purposely with their personal appearance, while in Los Angeles the number is only 5% who do not concern themselves.

23. Services in the house of the mourner: In regards to the services in the house of the mourner, there are very few, if any, in Wilkes-Barre, whereas 65% have them in Los Angeles. The reason is based on population. Since there is a smaller population in Wilkes-Barre and it is difficult to get daily morning services, all the services are held in the Synagogue. In order to be consistent, if one started services in the house of the mourner one should finish them for the week. However, this would be difficult since services must be held in the synagogue and there would be a danger that it would be difficult to get a quorum (Minyan) in both places. In Los Angeles even the Reform Jews attempt to have at least one or two services in the house of the mourner. If one based the results on regular daily services, the percentage would slip down to 5%.

24. The Kaddish: 85% of all the mourners chant the Kaddish at the funeral service in Wilkes-Barre. The remaining

15% refers to the Reform membership where the Rabbi recites the Kaddish instead of the mourners themselves. In Los Angeles, the number who repeat the Kaddish is 80%.

25. The Yahrzeit: (Memorial) In Wilkes-Barre, 85% of the people observe a form of Yahrzeit whether by lighting a candle or coming to the Temple. In Los Angeles, the number is approximately the same.

26. Memorial Services: In Wilkes-Barre, 65% of the population attend memorial services which are held throughout the year. In Los Angeles, no figure could be ascertained.

27. The tombstone: Both in Wilkes-Barre and Los Angeles the percentage of people who put some sort of marking on the grave runs almost 100%.

The next six criteria have nothing to do with traditional practice. However, there are practices which have crept in as a result of cross-cultural influences. It will be noticed that with these criteria, the Wilkes-Barre percentage is much lower than the Los Angeles percentage.

28. Embalming: In Wilkes-Barre only 5% of all the corpses are embalmed. In Los Angeles the figure is 50%.

29. Flowers at the funeral: In 5% of the cases, flowers are sent to the funeral home or the graveside in Wilkes-Barre. The majority of the gifts are in the form of donations to organizations that were associated with the deceased. In Los Angeles 90% of the funerals have flowers sent to the funeral home or displayed on the grave site.

30. Open Casket during the service: Here appears a rather colloquial example of funeral practices. In Wilkes-Barre, nearly all the caskets are open during the service. While in Los Angeles, practically no caskets are kept open during the service.

31. Open Casket before or after funeral service: In Wilkes-Barre, no caskets are open before or after the service. The explanation given is that it's too disruptive to open or close a casket. In Los Angeles 70% of the caskets are open before or after the service.

32. Viewing the remains the night before: In Wilkes-Barre, this is rarely done with a percentage of only 3%. In Los Angeles, the percentage reaches 25%.

33. Family Room: In Wilkes-Barre, none of the mourners sit in a family room but rather in the first row amidst the congregation. In Los Angeles, the percentage reaches a high of 95%.

Conclusion and Summary

Although this was not a nation wide survey and one must recognize the fact that practices vary in different cities, nevertheless, the survey has a merit of taking a more or less traditional city and comparing it to a city in which a tradition has had little chance to develop. Perhaps the typical national picture lies somewhere in between Wilkes-Barre and Los Angeles. What is clear, however, is that the survey indicates a lessening

of traditional Jewish practices as far as the funeral is concerned. There is no doubt, when one analyzes the percentages, that the traditional Jewish funeral is being changed under the influence of modern American culture. This change is most noticeable in a city such as Los Angeles, but it also is evident in traditional strong holds such as Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The fact that there is one funeral director in Wilkes-Barre, however, may raise the percentage of traditional practice. This change might have been much more noticeable, otherwise.

CHAPTER V

HOW MODERN CROSS-CULTURAL INFLUENCES HAVE WEAKENED THE JEWISH FUNERAL WITH REGARD TO THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF THE MOURNER

In the previous chapter, there was an analysis of how the percentage of traditional Jewish funeral observances have decreased in a modern age. The purpose of this chapter will be to specifically show how cross-cultural influences have weakened the Jewish funeral. The difference in the approach of these two chapters is that in the former chapter, an attempt was made to show lessening of ritual in percentages without analyzing any of the active forces of change.

This chapter will attempt to analyze certain specific active forces of change which have had a negative affect on the psychological efficacy of traditional Jewish mourning.

The first major active force for change is the emphasis on the coffin as a status symbol or as a thing of aesthetic beauty. It was pointed out in the previous chapter that 75% of the bereaved in Los Angeles and 60% of them in Wilkes-Barre chose a relatively fancy coffin.

Madison Avenue techniques are often used to promote the sale of coffins.

Jessica Mitford writes in her book, The American Way of Death:

The latest in casket styles range from classic (that is, the "urn theme,") to colonial to French provincial to a futuristic 'transition' casket, styled for the future - surely, something there to please everybody. The patriotic theme comes through very strong just now, finding its most eloquent expression in Boyertown Burial Casket Company's 'Valley Forge.' This one is 'designed to reflect a rugged, strong, soldier like quality associated with historic Valley Forge. . . . Its charm lies in the warm beauty in the natural grain of the finish of the finest maple hardwoods. The casket designed indeed for a soldier - one that symbolizes the solid, dependable, courageous American ideal so bravely tested at Valley Forge'. . .

For the less rugged, the Bon Vivant that dreams of rubbing shoulders with the international smart set, a gay dog who'd risk all on the turn of a card, there is the 'Monaco,' a duraseal metal unit by the Merit company of Chicago, 'with sea mist polished finish, interior richly lined in six hundred Aqua Supreme Cheney Velvet magnificently quilted and sheared, with matching jumbo bolster and coverlet.' Set against a romantic background depicting a brilliant Riviera sky, it's allure heightened by tropical suggestions of ferns and a golden harp, this model can be had for not much more than, a round-trip to Monte Carlo.¹

The author remembers quite well accompanying a bereaved family to a mortician's display room where the caskets were arranged under special lighting. The whole atmosphere had the effect of a glamorous new car show room with little signs describing the virtue of each casket as well as the price list. Among the scores of caskets there wasn't one plain wooden casket that would conform to Jewish ritual. When the mourner, upon the suggestion from others, asked for this plain casket, he was told that they would have to get it up from the cellar and could have it there in a few hours if he really wanted that

¹Jessie Mitford, The American Way of Death (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 57-58.

type of coffin. The full effect of the coffin selection room was that of a very beautiful warm aesthetic atmosphere. One could almost get carried away with the idea that he was picking out a fine piece of furniture from which he would gain a lot of wonderful use. Thus, the emphasis on picking the coffin provides an aesthetic or tranquilizing effect rather than making a person face the reality of death.

In another way, the selection of the coffin hampers facing the reality of death. The focal point of a funeral service is understandably on the remains of the deceased encased in the casket. If the casket is of such beauty, magnificence, and opulence it would appear that it would detract from setting the atmosphere of death. It is conceivable that it might become an object of admiration rather than a stimulus to sympathy.

Among the criteria for Jewish funeral, it was noted in the previous chapter that fully 99% of those Jews who go to a Jewish mortician are buried in a Jewish cemetery. (Criterion number 10). In the old time cemetery there was no doubt of what it was - it was a cemetery. One can visit in older Jewish cemeteries and find a myriad of large tomb stones on which is inscribed the date of birth, death, and perhaps a quotation from the book of Psalms. In some rare instances, one may even see a picture of the deceased. The old Jewish cemetery that is found in many parts of the country was not beautiful, aesthetic, or particularly comforting. It had an atmosphere all of its own.

The graves were crowded together and there was no particular beauty about it. If one walks through the graveyards in the eastern part of the country, one can see that little stones have been left on the tombstones as reminder that one has visited them.

Under the influence of modern American culture, the Jewish cemetery has changed. A modern cemetery has eliminated the headstone or large tombstone. It has also eliminated the foot paths between the graves.² The tombstone has been replaced by a standard bronze marker which is flush with the ground and eliminates the need for hand trimming of grave plots since power mowers can very easily go over the surface. Jessica Mitford estimates that it saves 75% of the maintenance cost.³

Mitford, in her book The American Way of Death also described the beauties of such cemeteries as Forest Lawn where one feels that he is in a lovely countryside rather than a cemetery.⁴

The effect of these modern cemeteries has eliminated the atmosphere of the old time cemetery in which one knew that he was in a grave yard. Today, when one visits a so called "modern cemetery" one feels that he is at the countryside enjoying a pleasant afternoon. He does not have the feeling of death, mourning, or grief. Shana Alexander writing in Life

²Ibid., p. 127.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Magazine about a current movie The Loved One, a satire on funeral directors, sums up in a sense, the effect of a modern cemetery. She writes:

One does not really own one's own death. It belongs to the living. It is their need to express their grief that must be contended with. Thus, I think the only funeral custom I really object to - including insarcophagusment orbits of eternal grace, and any other outrageous idea that funeral directors might dream up - is the denial of death, or rather the denial of the deep human need to mourn. The true queasy-making vulgarity of The Loved One, I think, lies in the fact that it mixes up jokes about our attitudes toward death, which are often absurd, with death itself, which never is. The Forest Lawn man had said proudly, 'You get so caught up in the beauty of the place, you forget you are in a cemetery.' But when I go there I don't want to forget. I want with all my heart to remember.⁵

Another modern innovation is the prominence of the funeral director making arrangements for the burial. In America the caring for the remains of close relatives, or non relatives living near by, was in former generations a responsibility of the family members or neighbors.⁶ Thus, families could face the reality of death. In Jewish tradition the Chevrah Kadisha took the place of the funeral director and in conjunction with the family, made arrangements for the burial. The Chevrah Kadisha was not composed of professional people in the sense that they were using their society to make a profit, but rather they were friends of the family who knew the deceased intimately and could

⁵Shana Alexander, "A Funny-Ugh Movie," Life, LIX (October 8, 1965), p. 34.

⁶LeRoy Bowman, The American Funeral (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1965), p. 2.

have a sense of empathy in the situation. Therefore, they could provide a sense of close support to the family in times of sorrow. Today, the funeral director is a person who may never know the people that he is burying much less the various members of the family. Bowman has written about the various situations regarding the family and the undertaker.⁷ He has indicated the predispositions of each party when they come together, they have expectations often never expressed or beneath consciousness. The less aware the undertaker may be of the presence of these patterns of expectation in his own sub-conscious mind, Bowman writes, the more difficult it becomes for him to deal rationally on the points in question.⁸ Bowman further states the undertaker may be impatient of any extraordinary requests and has a pattern of procedure from which he dislikes to deviate.⁹ There is also a tendency on the part of the customer to have an aversion toward the undertaker. This aversion is based upon the speculation that the undertaker will do something to the body of a loved one who has died. This speculation does not make for close ties of empathy between the bereaved and the undertaker. That there is a lack of empathy is further illustrated by a statement by a funeral director quoted in Bowman's book:

⁷Ibid., p. 29.

⁸Ibid., p. 30.

⁹Ibid.

The family doesn't hire a funeral director to weep with it; it hires and wants a normal mind to guide and advise it's abnormal minds in every manner financially and otherwise.¹⁰

Bowman goes on to state that in a large number of family interviews there comes not the slightest evidence that they hire an undertaker to guide their "abnormal minds" but that they could make their own decisions and desire to do so by using facts and not being pressured.¹¹

Since the numbers of Chevrah Kadisha in a city like Los Angeles is limited to one or two such organizations, the warm supportive relationship that a Chevrah Kadisha fosters, appears to be supplanted by the more cold and professional mortician. In many cases, the bereaved may not feel that they are dealing with a friend but rather a business antagonist when it comes to making funeral arrangements.

As was stated in the previous chapter, the lowering of the casket into the ground frequently serves as an opportunity to let the bereaved express themselves by crying and weeping. It also has the effect that letting them face the reality of death, since their loved ones are being put into the earth. The trend today is against lowering the casket into the ground and against covering the casket with shovels full of dirt. The custom today is to cover the casket with greens and have artificial grass cover the dirt that was excavated. The coffin

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

¹¹ Ibid.

is then lowered to the level of the ground around it before the greens are placed over the casket. After the service, the family then leaves and the coffin is lowered by the funeral director with two attendants.

The reason that is given for this procedure is from a technical viewpoint and from a so called psychological viewpoint. The psychological viewpoint is summed up by Rabbi Israel Moshowitz when he addressed a rabbinical student body on April 3, 1957. The author was in the class and has a set of mimeographed notes to quote Rabbi Moshowitz exactly. When asked the question of throwing dirt or putting dirt on the casket Rabbi Moshowitz reported:

I don't like to see the family throw dirt on the dead; it renders no psychological purpose; it jars. Cover the casket rather with greens. But the Rabbi stands waiting for the casket to be covered - for religious Halachic purposes.¹²

The second reason given for not lowering the casket, and perhaps the real reason, is in the fact that the funeral directors claim that the service loses its dignity when workmen come in and have to lower the casket. Sometimes the casket shifts, loses its balance and workmen have to move quickly to right it. Also, they have to seal the vault which takes time.¹³ A funeral director has also said that when it comes to a crypt or mausoleum,

¹²Address by Rabbi Israel Moshowitz, Jewish Theological Seminary, April 3, 1957.

¹³Alvin Malinow, Funeral Director, Los Angeles.

the motor that raises the casket is particularly loud and could cause a negative reaction on the part of the mourners.¹⁴

As far as Rabbi Moshowitz statement that dirt jars, one may reply that death jars, and that the purpose of a funeral is not to smooth things over so people do not face death squarely but rather to make them face the reality of a loss. In the same lecture Rabbi Moshowitz did not give a direct answer when questioned as far as the use of tranquilizing pills during the funeral. Therefore, it would appear that he may be a little sensitive about hurting people's feelings at a funeral. He also makes the statement that the person who cries the loudest may have hurt the deceased the most.¹⁵ Thus, he seems to intimate that a person who has not hurt the deceased would be able to in a sense to control his emotions. In the author's city, the custom is that at every funeral the casket is lowered into the earth. The lowering is done with dispatch and without any particular difficulty. The whole operation takes but a few minutes and none of the dignity of the service appears to be lost.

The wide spread use of mausoleums also precludes the idea of lowering the casket into the ground for obvious reasons. Mitford claims that the mausoleum is a tremendous profit making device for the cemetery industry. The cost of a mausoleum crypt

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Moshowitz, op. cit.

being two to four times that of a cemetery plot.¹⁶ It is not the purpose of this paper to attack the profit making motives of cemeteries, but rather to ascertain the psychological results of certain practices. The whole idea of a mausoleum has an air of unreality about it. Some of these mausoleum buildings are exquisite while others may look like giant egg crates.¹⁷

In modern funeral practices, the coffin is left in the hall of the mausoleum as movers would leave a piece of furniture in an empty room. The mourners and friends leave before the insertion of the coffin for the assembly, since it is clumsy and awkward to raise the casket by means of a noisy electric motor. The author remembers officiating at a funeral in which four members of a prominent family were killed in an accident. This family was not particularly traditional and the survivors insisted upon a Liberal service with placing of the bodies in crypts. After a few prayers at the side of the mausoleum, the crowd left and returned to their cars. A few days later, the author received a call from one of the deceased's best friends. This person although Jewish, had never been in a Synagogue during his adult life. For a long time no one in the town even knew that he was even of the Jewish faith. His feelings of incompleteness were summed up in the following statement, which was

¹⁶Jessica Mitford, The American Way of Death (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 129.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 138.

written down by the author soon after he had finished speaking:

You know, Rabbi, how it really affected me was the fact that I just left them there, the caskets that is, waiting. Everything seemed to be so incomplete. I wanted to go back there myself and make sure that they were at least put in the little slots that were covered with velvet. I'm not a religious man, but some how the thing seemed to me to be all wrong and artificial. I had decided upon buying a crypt but when I saw how this was handled, I think I have changed my mind. Poor things!

According to the statistics in the previous chapter, the percentage of all the deceased who are embalmed is close to 50% in Los Angeles though in Wilkes-Barre only 5% of the corpses are embalmed. Nevertheless, there appears to be a trend toward embalming throughout the entire country. Embalming, in itself an expensive operation, has opened the way for the development and expansion of the methods that in part have resulted in increasingly costly funerals.¹⁸ Mitford quoting Mr. Don H. Eccles, text book, Modern Mortuary Science, reports "In fact, there is no profession on record which has made such rapid advancement in this country as embalming."¹⁹

The reason usually given for embalming are two, namely, hygiene and mental health.²⁰ However, Mitford disproves the first one by quoting Dr. Jesse Carr, Chief of Pathology of the San Francisco General Hospital, a Professor of Pathology at the University of California Medical School, who said in answer to Mitford's question about undertakers and their capacity of

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

embalmers being guardians of public health replied, "They are not guardians of anything except their pocket books. Public health virtues of embalming? You can write it off as inapplicable to our present day conditions." Dr. Carr went on to explain that in the case of the communicable diseases the dead body presents certain advantages over a live one and states, "There are several advantages to being dead, you don't excrete, inhale, exhale, or perspire."²¹

The second reason, that of mental health, is exploded by Leroy Bowman who discusses the so called "Memory Image" of the deceased face. The universal contention of the funeral directors is that the last look of the deceased in the casket creates a memory image which will have a lasting impression on the memory of the bereaved person.²² In order to create this lasting memory, the corpse must have a natural look. The only way to create this "natural" look is through embalming. However, Bowman writes that no evidence that this claim is justified is to be found in the works of psychologists, but rather evidence to the contrary may be gathered. He states that the lasting image does not usually originate in the last look at the body of the deceased but in experiences prior to that time.²³

If the deceased looked so realistic and lifelike in the

²¹Ibid., p. 83.

²²Leroy Bowman, The American Funeral (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1959), p. 12.

²³Ibid., p. 12.

casket, then there would be a lessening of the reality factor of death. The author will never forget one statement that was made by a man as he was passing the casket inside a funeral home, "How healthy he looks!" Just as the harsh realities of the grave tend to be softened by the skills of the funeral director and the cemetery personnel, so the harsh realities of a dead person tend to be softened by the skills of the embalmer.²⁴ Very often the family may have seen a loved one suffer and waste away, are shocked when he suddenly appears much more lifelike and younger and vigorous than he did during his illness.

As was stated before, (page 52) flowers were never sprinkled or placed on a grave or casket according to Jewish tradition since flowers played an important part in the idolatrous rites of many ancient peoples and would be regarded as a pagan custom by the Jews. In the American Funeral there is a picture of a traditional Jewish service for the dead.²⁵ The casket is entirely bare and the walls are free from any sort of flowers or greens. Yet, in Los Angeles fully 90% of all the Jewish funerals have some flowers present. The reasons given are twofold: Number one, flowers are an expression of friends who want to express their sympathy but do not know how else to do it; second, flowers are said to give a psychological lift by

²⁴Ruth M. Harmer, The High Cost of Dying (New York: Crowell-Collier, 1963), p. 148.

²⁵Bowman, op. cit., p. 16.

giving warmth and comfort.²⁶ The first fact seems to be born out by a statement of a Los Angeles funeral director who says that a great many of the flowers come from Christian donors who were friends of the Jewish person who was deceased. As far as the psychological aspects of flowers are concerned, Mitford wants to know what psychologists make these statements. She states that this is just the position of the flower lobby.²⁷ One can often notice the profuse use of flowers at many funerals. Flowers often completely cover the casket so that the person viewing the funeral has only in his line of vision a sea of buds and bright colors. Since flowers are often associated during the lifetime with many happy occasions such as weddings or anniversaries, there may be a feeling of ambivalence when one views all these flowers. It would only be natural to assume that a person would be quite impressed with their beauty and would even have a pleasant effect from looking at them. This pleasant effect is counter to one of the principles of mourning - namely, facing the reality of death. The use of flowers could coincide with the use of artificial green grass to cover the natural dirt that has been excavated. This is not to say, that flowers in other religions or traditions if judiciously used could not have a comforting effect since the use of flowers in Christian burials is more or less expected. However, in Jewish tradition flowers have had no place until recently and therefore

²⁶Mitford, op. cit., p. 114.

²⁷Ibid.

particularly in the minds of the older Jew, the use might be disconcerting. Also, two of the main purposes of mourning namely the need to express emotions and facing the reality of death might not be met.

Among other innovations to Jewish practice influenced by the modern American scene is viewing of the body previous to the actual funeral. This practice has been strongly condemned by traditional Jews and pronouncements have been made against it by boards of Rabbis,²⁸ who claim it is against dictates of Jewish tradition. Fully 25% of the people in Los Angeles have a viewing the night before. The disadvantage of the wake for grief therapy is that it often assumes the character of a social event.²⁹ Casual conversation begins and people begin to talk about things other than the bereavement period. Also, the place in which the wake is held is often made as homelike and as cheerful as possible.³⁰ Thus, a sociable wake may serve to dilute the whole process of mourning by changing it into a social affair rather than an affair which gives support to the family. The positive aspects of the viewing will be discussed in the coming chapter.

Among the final modern customs which have infiltrated the

²⁸United Synagogue of America, "Guide to Funeral Practices" (New York: October, 4, 1964, mimeographed).

²⁹Bowman, op. cit., p. 16.

³⁰Ibid.

Jewish funeral and mourning, is the introduction of the family room. In such modern cities as Los Angeles, 95% of all the people or mourners are placed in the family room during this service. There, they can be addressed by the clergyman but not seen by the rest of those attending the service.³¹ The rationale for the use of the family room in a Jewish service has been given by a Jewish funeral director who states that if the family occupies the front rows, as in the traditional Jewish funeral, they are often annoyed by well meaning friends who come up to them before the funeral starts. This serves to irritate the family, he claims and they are merely "objects for the crowd." He stated that the family room gives them a sense of privacy for which most people ask.

The difficulty in the family room as far as grief therapy is concerned, is that it cuts the family off from protecting and supporting relationships, the third major principle of grief. When the family is seated in the chapel or the synagogue the friends and relations lend their emotional support. The family is literally among the community of mourners or the "grief anonymous" which Bachmann mentions (page 33). When each person comes up to them and they cry in recognition that they both have had a common loss, this act of weeping helps to express deep feelings, the first major law of grief and mourning. Likewise, a family may want to see who is there in the congregation and be

³¹ Bowman, op. cit., p. 14.

comforted by the outpouring of support. This wish is borne out by a statement quoted by a funeral director who said that one family acted "pretty funny" because they wanted to sit in the audience to see who came to the funeral. By being in the family room and looking at the rabbi and casket through a curtain, the family may have a dream-like effect of unreality which will not allow them to receive the full benefits of the reality producing funeral session.

Conclusion and Summary

That the acculturation process in America has made inroads upon traditional Jewish practices, there can be no doubt. Changes always occur in the highly pluralistic and mobile society such as ours.³² The crucial point is whether these changes are good or bad for the mourning process. It would appear that there are many modern customs which have a negative effect upon healthy grief mourning. These negative effects not only come from the deterioration of Jewish mourning practices with its age old folk wisdom, but also come from the introduction of new and modern techniques under the guise of efficiency and "beauty." These innovations have actually weakened the fabric of healthy traditional Jewish mourning.

³²Robert W. Habenstein, and William M. Lamers, The History of American Funeral Directing (Milwaukee: Bulfin Printers, 1962), p. 559.

CHAPTER VI

HOW MODERN CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES HAVE IMPROVED THE MOURNING PROCESS

Cross cultural influences have improved the mourning process in Jewish life by several ways. First of all, there is the trend away from the early burial. According to Jewish law, the corpse must be buried the very next day. The reason for this was a natural aversion on the part of the Jews for a dead body, and also the fact that in the hot Mediterranean climates the body would deteriorate quickly.¹ However, with modern refrigeration techniques and embalming, the body can be preserved without noticeable changes.² In 50% of all burials there is a delay of more than one day in Wilkes-Barre, while in Los Angeles the figure rises to 85%. This delay, coupled with the advances of communication and transportation, have advanced the possibility of the mourner to fulfill two of the laws of grief, namely, the maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships and the need for some type of culturally sanctioned action. These two laws are fulfilled by making it possible for members of the family who are scattered to assemble. For

¹Theodore H. Gaster, The Holy and the Profane (New York: William Sloane, 1955), p. 169.

²Jessica Mitford, The American Way of Death (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 84.

example, before the days of high speed train or jet transportation, it was literally impossible for people living in one end of the country to be at the funeral in time. Or even more dramatic, is the situation brought about by the advent of modern telephone or telegraph communication. Before this time, it might be days, weeks, or months before members of a family even knew of the death of another member. Now with increased communications and with the modern jet plane, any person in any part of the globe can be present at a funeral if the funeral is delayed for a moderate length of time. The assembling of a family is perhaps the greatest comfort and solace that the bereaved can have. Modern travel allows those members of the family who are scattered to be present at the funeral and thus take part in a culturally sanctioned action.³

³The author had a personal experience while writing this paper which bears out the importance of the delay of burial coupled with modern transportation. His mother had come out to California to be present for the birth of her grandchild. The very first day she arrived, (after only spending three hours with her son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren,) the phone rang and she was told that her daughter's husband, a young man of 49, had passed away suddenly. There is an extremely close relationship between the mother and the daughter as well as a great bond of affection between the mother-in-law and her son-in-law. In the space of an hour or two, the mother was on her way back home, some three thousand miles away, and was soon at the side of her daughter. During the funeral, she gave her comfort and solace of which only a mother can be capable. Had there not been the telephone, the jet plane, and the delay of burial, this comfort would not have been possible. Likewise, the mother would have felt much worse if she had not been present at the funeral. She had a chance to do her own grief work by taking part in the funeral and greeting friends.

The delay in the funeral also permits the possibility of viewing the body at the funeral home the night before. It has already been discussed above about the dangers of the wake being turned into a social affair. However, it is quite conceivable that under controlled conditions where this might not be allowed to happen, the viewing before the funeral would serve as a good opportunity for friends and relatives to face the reality of death by seeing the body in a lifeless state. The author frequently has heard members of the bereaved family stating after an early burial, "Why just last night he was living and now he is in the ground."

Another cross-cultural influence which might be helpful in facing the reality of death is the appearance and atmosphere in a modern funeral parlor. A funeral parlor allows to set the mood of death by the use of lighting, music and decor. It is totally different from the every day environment. Likewise, it may be better to hold the funeral itself from a funeral parlor than from a synagogue. Bachmann writes, that many times the size of the funeral is small and there is "something psychologically empty about holding a funeral in a large sanctuary with only a few friends and relatives attending."⁴

The writer believes that by and far the most important cross-cultural influence to help Jewish grief is the opening of the casket at the end of the service. The opening of the

⁴C. Charles Bachmann, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 131.

casket is not to create a "memory image" that will be held by the relatives and friends, as was discussed in the previous chapter, but rather to create the expression of deep feelings and allow for the facing the reality of death. In the majority of Jewish funerals there is no viewing, and the opening of the casket affords an opportunity to see the dead person in the casket. More important, the sight of a loved one in the casket helps to give vent to deep feelings of grief. The author has noticed that the most tearful time of the funeral is when friends and the family pass by the open casket. They may be unmoved during the eulogy but at the time of the final face to face farewell, there is generally great crying and wailing. The family also sees friends passing by the casket and weeping, and that allows them to see the giving of support. When the coffin lid is closed some of the realization that the loved one will no longer be with them seems to strike home. The only difficulty with this procedure is that many times a funeral director and well meaning friends try to pull the family away from the coffin as soon as they begin to cry, thus aborting the natural expression of deep feelings.

Conclusion and Summary

It is quite evident that modern culture has taken away more of the therapeutic grief techniques of the Jewish funeral than it has given. With the advent of modern life, traditional

Jewish mourning techniques have declined without being replaced by something which will serve as a buttress in time of sorrow. The one big advantage in modern life is the means of communication and swiftness of travel. This advantage is of immeasurable importance to a family that has its members scattered at the time of a bereavement.

CHAPTER VII

A BALANCED THEORETICAL APPROACH TO MOURNING

Five principles of healthy mourning have been distilled from a survey of the literature on grief. It might be valuable to fit these principles into a theoretical framework for mourning which will serve as a general guide to the rabbi in all forms of the bereavement process.

Spiro, as demonstrated above (page 10), builds his foundation on psychoanalytical theory. Every effective grief counselor should be conversant with the works of Freud and Lindemann from which come the modern principles of bereavement. Lindemann uses psychoanalytic insights, such as hostility and repression, as a basis for his approach.

After the clergyman has become familiar with the psychoanalytic approach, he might be further benefited by the two new approaches of Reality Therapy and the "Revised Model" of pastoral counseling. It is not the intent of the author to contrast these approaches but rather to distill what is best from each and to offer a balanced concept of grief therapy. In order to see how these two approaches add to the techniques of grief therapy, a brief survey of each is needed.

Reality Therapy

Reality Therapy was developed by Dr. Glasser under the guidance and inspiration of his teacher, Dr. G. L. Harrington of the Veterans Administration in Los Angeles.¹ Dr. Glasser, while in training as a psychiatric resident, believed that classic psychoanalytic techniques and procedures were futile. He maintained that all patients deny the reality of the world around them. Some may break the law, others may claim their neighbors are plotting against them. Whatever the situation, they are denying the real world. He has stated,

A therapy that leads all patients toward reality, toward grappling successfully with the tangible and the intangible aspects of the real world, might accurately be² called therapy toward reality, or simply Reality Therapy.

In Reality Therapy, the therapist must not only help the patient face the real world, but also help him fulfill his needs in the real world. The basic needs that Glasser discusses concern involvement with other people. He cites two basic needs which should be recognized by therapists, namely the need to love and be loved, and the need to feel worthwhile to ourselves and others.³ Glasser then stresses responsibility, a concept basic to Reality Therapy, which is defined as the ability to fulfill one's needs and to do so in a way that does not deprive

¹William Glasser, Reality Therapy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. xxiii (Author's notes).

²Ibid., p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 9.

others of the ability to fulfill their needs.⁴ He emphasizes that there is no such thing as "mental illness" but rather that people are acting irresponsibly, i.e., do not fulfill their needs.⁵

The application of the specialized learning system which Glasser calls Reality Therapy is comprised of three separate but intimately interwoven procedures. First, there is the involvement. The therapist must become so involved with the patient that the patient can begin to face reality and see how his behavior is unrealistic.⁶

Second, the therapist must reject the behavior which is unrealistic but still accept the patient and maintain his involvement with him.⁷

Third, in varying degrees depending upon the patient, the therapist must teach the patient better ways to fulfill his needs within the confines of reality.⁸

As far as involvement is concerned, Glasser makes six points:

1. Because the concept of mental illness is not accepted, the patient cannot be considered a mentally ill person with no responsibility for his behavior.⁹

2. Working in the present and future, there is no involvement with the patient's past, since what has

⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁶Ibid., p. 21.

⁸Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 15.

⁷Ibid.

⁹Ibid., p. 44.

happened to him in the past cannot be changed; nor is the idea accepted that he is limited by the past.¹⁰

3. The therapist relates as himself to patients and does not attempt to become a transference figure to them.¹¹

4. Unconscious conflicts are not sought, and the patient cannot become involved with the therapist by excusing his behavior on the basis of unconscious motivations.¹²

5. The morality of behavior is emphasized.¹³

6. The patients are taught better ways to fulfill their needs.¹⁴

Summing up the main merits of Reality Therapy, five tenets might stand out in relation to grief counseling.

1. A person must face the reality of the world around him.

2. A person must accept responsibility for his behavior.

3. A person must become involved with others to be helped or to help himself.

4. Standards and values of the morality of behavior must be emphasized.

5. People can be taught better ways to fulfill their needs.

An attempt will now be made to relate these five tenets of Reality Therapy to the five principles of healthy mourning given in the first chapter of this dissertation.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 45.

The first main tenet of Reality Therapy is that a person must face the reality of the world around him. Facing the reality of the world around him relates directly with the first principle of grief therapy namely that one must face the reality of death. The healthy thing for one to do is not to try to deny or repress feelings about death and eliminate mourning practices from one's experience. One must accept the fact that death is part of life and that no one can expect to have his family or friends escape death.

The second tenet of Reality Therapy; namely that a person must accept responsibility for his behavior, is relevant to four of the five principles of grief therapy. First, a person has the responsibility to face the reality of death by accepting the pain and loss as well as working through his grief. Second, the mourner has a responsibility to maintain supporting relationships. Third, it relates to the need to be needed. A person must take responsibility for a task such as caring for those who are dependent upon him, as well as giving support to others. Fourth, a person should be responsible for undergoing some type of culturally sanctioned action. A person has the responsibility to undergo the mourning processes of the particular culture. By undergoing these processes, he allows other people to give vent to their grief since he is a symbol of the deceased - through his relation to the deceased. The mourner is also responsible for making the funeral arrangements and as such cannot shirk this role which culture has placed upon him.

The third tenet of Reality Therapy, namely that a person must become involved with others to be helped or to help himself relates directly with the third major principle of grief, the maintaining of pretecing and supporting relationships as well as the fourth major principle, the need to be needed.

The fourth tenet of Reality Therapy, namely standards and values of the morality of behavior are to be emphasized, applies to the fifth principle of grief, culturally sanctioned action. Certain standards and values of what is right and wrong in the funeral are derived from ancient Jewish folk wisdom. Thus, the rabbi has the right to point out these standards and values and allow the mourner to decide which is best suited to him.

The final test of Reality Therapy, namely, people can be taught better ways to fulfill their needs, is related to the fifth principle of a culturally sanctioned action. Certain rituals of mourning of Jewish life can serve as an educational instrument to teach people how to fulfill their psychological needs during the time of stress. If the laws of mourning, which are psychologically valid, are taught to people, they will be able to grieve in a way which can best help them.

No mention has been made of Glasser's main point of ignoring the past. Although no attempt is being made to contrast various schools of therapy, perhaps the importance of the past should be discussed, lest it appear that the author agrees with Glasser on this point.

Lindemann has made the statement that proper management of grief reactions must utilize a review of the mourner's relationships to the deceased.¹⁵ If one accepts Glasser at face value, then no discussion of the mourner's past experience with the deceased is indicated. This approach overlooks the fact that feelings about the past are very much part of the present in grief. If deep feelings are to be expressed, does the clergyman actually suppress any references to what has happened in the past? Should he censor the statements that may be pouring forth from the mourner and advise him only to discuss the present or the future? It would appear that the clergyman should allow the person to verbalize whatever he feels.

Likewise, Glasser seems to limit the establishment of rapport with the counselee if he neglects the past. Rapport and involvement occur when the counselor talks about areas that are meaningful to the other person. A person's past relationships may be the most meaningful aspects of his life. Satir in her approach to counseling emphasizes the major importance of a "family life chronology."¹⁶ It is important that the clergyman establish rapport as soon as possible. One effective way would be to have the mourner discuss his past relationships with his

¹⁵Erich Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," American Journal of Psychiatry, CI (September, 1963), 19-26.

¹⁶Virginia Satir, Conjoint Family Therapy (Palo Alto: Science and Behavior Books, 1964), p. 112.

family.

Nevertheless, Glasser has much to offer when it comes to applying some of his thinking to Jewish mourning practices. The themes of responsibility and involvement are perfectly compatible with Jewish mourning processes and, if used as a general orientation, can be of great help to the rabbi ministering to the grief sufferer. Also, Reality Therapy's great contribution is contained in the concept that the present and the future should be emphasized.

The "Revised Model" of Counseling and it's Relation to the Laws of Mourning.

The "Revised Model" of counseling, advanced by Dr. Howard Clinebell, Jr. of the School of Theology at Claremont, is summarized in Chapter II of the yet unpublished manuscript of his new book entitled, Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling. The core paragraph which describes the new "Revised Model" is as follows:

It emphasizes supporting rather than uncovering techniques; improving relationships rather than producing intra-psychic changes, managing and utilizing ones positive resources, in addition to reducing negative factors; coping successfully with one's current situation planning for the future rather than exploring the past; confronting the realities of one's situation including the need to be more responsible. . . . one strives to improve feelings and attitudes.¹⁷

Dr. Clinebell further states that the new thrust

¹⁷Howard Clinebell, Jr., Manuscript on Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling, Chapter 2.

emphasizes counseling of the entire family unit¹⁸ and uses a technique of mobilizing one's Adult (Berne) to guide and control his Child and Parent.¹⁹ Dr. Clinebell further intimates that the new approach is action oriented. The new approach makes the point that changes in relationships and behavior often produce decisive feelings and attitudinal changes.²⁰ Counseling should help a person deal constructively with his situation. It is necessary, Dr. Clinebell writes, that the still active past be dealt with, if it is projected on the screen of current relationships.²¹ The whole counseling process focuses on conflicting relationships.²²

As noted in the above brief summary of some salient points of the "Revised Model of Counseling," it has a great deal in common with Reality Therapy. It is action oriented and stresses involvement, i.e., improving relationships. It emphasizes the need of interaction with others, and, like Reality Therapy, stresses the need of coping successfully with one's current situation and planning for the future.

However, the "Revised Model" offers additional approaches. One helpful addition is that the "Revised Model" emphasizes a supportive relationship. Although involvement may be stressed in Reality Therapy, support by the counselor or therapist is not

¹⁸Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 6.

²⁰Ibid., p. 7.

²¹Ibid., p. 10.

²²Ibid.

really stressed, as it is in the "Revised Model." There are times when warm support is necessary. This warm support which is emphasized in the "Revised Model" appears related directly to the second basic principle of mourning, that deep feelings must be expressed, and the third, that protecting and supporting relationships must be maintained. This supportive relationship might occur when a clergyman pays a condolence call to a bereaved person and says, "Tell me something about your father." After initiating a grief response, the minister can then be a supportive listener. The mobilizing of the Adult in the "Revised Model" would relate directly to the first principle of facing the reality of death, and the fifth principle, the need for some type of culturally sanctioned action, since it is the adult who must deal with the realities of life and must take responsible action. Another advantage of the "Revised Model" is that it takes into account negative guilt feelings. Not only does one manage to utilize one's positive resources, but one can reduce the negative factors. These negative factors might be likened to the guilt feelings with which a person must deal. The "Revised Model" seems to say that even though these feelings may be in the past, they should be dealt with if they influence present relationships. Thus, it would appear that if a person did not work through his feelings of guilt about his father, these same negative feelings may affect his relationships with the rest of his family and the community.

After these brief surveys, a new theoretical approach to

mourning, based not only on Freudian principles but also on such new approaches as the "Revised Model" of Pastoral Counseling and Reality Therapy, may be synthesized which can be used by the rabbi in ministering to the grief sufferer. This new theory of grief counseling can be stated as follows: A rabbi should offer a supportive relationship in which he tries to influence the bereaved to accept the reality of the situation and to act responsibly within the rules of culturally sanctioned action, allowing the bereaved to fulfill his needs through utilization of the five basic principles of grief therapy and with the rabbi acting as a teacher of standards and values.

Conclusion and Summary

The new insights of Reality Therapy and the "Revised Model" of counseling offer additional theoretical frameworks for the rabbi to help him in his grief ministering in a practical way. Nevertheless, there is a need also for appreciation of the insights and methods of frameworks. Practical aspects of this balanced approach, as well as concrete suggestions for actions based on it, will be offered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRACTICAL ROLE OF THE RABBI IN GRIEF THERAPY

In the previous chapter, a theory of grief counseling was stated; namely, the rabbi should offer a supportive relationship in which he tries to get the bereaved to accept the reality of the situation, to act responsibly within the rules of culturally sanctioned action which allow him to fulfill his needs through utilization of the five basic laws of grief, with the rabbi acting as a teacher of standards and values. The question may be asked in what manner can the rabbi use this theory of grief counseling in practical application in today's life? An analysis will be made of the role of the rabbi in relation to each main part of the new theory of grief counseling.

The Supportive Relationship

It is well known that one of the main roles of the clergy is the supportive aspect of its work. Robinson, De Marche, and Wagel write that the church can be related to the field of mental health on two levels - in a promotional role and in a supportive role. With its recreational, social, and family - education programs, the church helps to promote and maintain mental health; through the clergy it functions in a supportive role. Such as providing spiritual support to emotionally

disturbed people in times of stress and crisis.¹

Howard Clinebell, Jr. in his book Mental Health Through Christian Community lists supportive (including crisis) counseling as one of the eight basic types of counseling which a minister is called on to do.² He writes that the minister's role in normal grief is essentially to support, to encourage catharsis of feeling, and to make religious resources readily available.³ A Los Angeles funeral director has indicated that the rabbi's main duty is to support the family when they need support the most. Thus, it is seen that the sine qua non of grief counseling is the area of support from the clergyman.

There are several practical ways in which this support can be shown. The first practical suggestion is to "be there." There is no substitute for being there physically in the time of need. Worse yet, is the custom of having the Rabbi wait until he gets to the funeral parlor and then is handed a sheet of vital statistics from which he makes his eulogy. The only contact that the Rabbi has with the mourners is during the funeral itself.⁴

¹David Belgum, Guilt: Where Religion and Psychology Meet (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 96.

²Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Mental Health Through Christian Community (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 218.

³Ibid., p. 24.

⁴The importance of "being there" was dramatically brought home to the author's family a few weeks before this was written. The author's mother was visiting him in his home in California

Rabbi Israel Moshowitz in an address before the Rabbinical student body of the Jewish Theological Seminary stated:

To be very practical, the bereaved must always be visited. The Rabbi must see the family before the service in order to notice the attitude of the family and get pertinent information, indirectly, about the deceased. If called up in the middle of the night, the Rabbi must not refuse to come.

As for condolence calls the Rabbi must usually come only when the family sits "Shivah" in the local community. Then he must come.

The Midrash tells us that no one is too big or important not to visit the bereaved. Also, it is much better for the rabbi not only to be at the service, but he should go to the cemetery, too.⁵

From the above, it is quite evident that not only should one visit the bereaved but should visit them any time there is a great need. The interesting part about Rabbi Moshowitz's lecture is the fact that he advises the rabbis to go to the cemetery as well. His statement would indicate that there are rabbis who do not go to the cemetery, otherwise there would be no need to mention it. It appears unthinkable that the rabbi should not go to the cemetery even though he may be a busy man. The presence of the rabbi at the cemetery lends a degree of

and had just arrived. After playing for two or three hours with her grandchildren, she received a call from her local rabbi back in Pennsylvania stating that her son-in-law, a young man of forty-nine with three children, had passed away suddenly. The fact that the rabbi was there to give support was of immeasurable value. It demonstrated the type of support that was invaluable at a time of deep need.

⁵Lecture by Rabbi Moshowitz. Jewish Theological Seminary of America, April 3, 1957.

support which cannot be over estimated.

Coupled with the pre-funeral visit and appearing at the cemetery, the rabbi is under obligation to maintain his supportive role for a period of time after the funeral. Bachmann, writing about current parish pattern practices in Ministering to the Grief Sufferer, lists two questions which he asked a number of ministers. The first question was, "Do you make pre-funeral calls to the home after you are notified of the death?" Out of the four hundred and seventy two that answered, three hundred and ninety five replied they always did.⁶ He then asks the next question, "Do you follow up with calls in the home?" Out of the four hundred and seventy two, three hundred and twenty replied they always did.⁷ There were approximately twenty per cent less ministers who follow up with calls in the home than make pre-funeral calls even though the majority of respondents who made marginal notes on Bachmann's questionnaire indicated that the post-funeral call is the most important act of the work they do with the grief sufferer.⁸

What is more important is not only the immediate post-funeral call but a post-funeral call that takes place a week, two weeks, or a month after the actual funeral. In the period immediately following the funeral, there are plenty of people

⁶C. Charles Bachmann, Ministering to the Grief Sufferer (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1964), p. 128.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 129.

who come to the house and give support to the family. Relatives gather, friends and neighbors visit to offer their condolences. The bereaved may be in a state of excitement or shock and may not fully appreciate the loss that they have suffered. The crucial time appears to be after all the excitement has died down and the visiting becomes more infrequent on the part of friends and relatives. It is at such a time that a call by the rabbi can be of crucial importance. The rabbi, if he is sensitive, can then be a judge of how effective the grief wound has been drained and perhaps be in the position to offer courses of action. This is the ideal time for the rabbi to guide the person back into the community where there will be a continuing and a maintaining of supporting relationships. The author has had an opportunity to speak to many people from all parts of the country since his pulpit is located in a resort area which has a national reputation. One of the most frequent complaints that is heard is the fact that the rabbi had forgotten "about the family once the funeral was over." This fact was prominent in the minds of the people who had lost loved ones.⁹

⁹The importance of the post-funeral call has been deeply ingrained upon the mind of the writer due to a personal experience. When the author was seventeen his father passed away suddenly with a heart attack. His residence at that time was in a small coal mining community in north eastern Pennsylvania located five miles from a much larger city. A few weeks after the funeral, there was a knock on the door and in came the chief rabbi of the larger town. This man was well in his sixties and since he didn't drive he had to take a street car in the bitter cold in order to be able to make a visit. He was a very busy man and this visit probably took the major part of his afternoon

A Group Approach to Mourning

One of the classes in which the author has participated, was a class concerning small groups in the church which was given at the School of Theology at Claremont. The emphasis on a group approach in a church, changed the author's point of view in regards to handling a funeral situation particularly in regards to the eulogy. The use of group discussion and interaction can make the preparation of the eulogy much more meaningful.

Dr. Howard Clinebell, Jr. talking about the necessity of openness and honesty of communication in the growth of a healthy group quotes John Castile who says, "The vitality of a group's life together depends upon the freedom, honesty, and depth which members come to share their questions, problems, insights, and faith with one another."¹⁰ Clinebell continues that the kind of participation which produces emotional involvement is based on the awareness, that one's feelings and opinions are recognized, evaluated and taken into account in group decisions.¹¹

Clinebell further states:

due to the fact that he had to wait for street car connections. What was more important, was the fact that the family that he was visiting did not even belong to his congregation but to the local congregation. Although this man had done many fine things in the community, the author never really appreciated him as much as he did when the rabbi made this post-funeral call. After that, this man had assumed proportions of a saint in the author's eyes.

¹⁰Clinebell, op. cit., p. 155.

¹¹Ibid.

A religiously oriented group is the instrument par excellence for nurturing that experience of trust which is called faith. Trust is contagious and the place where it is most likely to be caught is a group committed to the religious quest. In a small, accepting group, many persons discover that the kingdom is already among us!¹²

Therefore we see that there is a certain advantage about a group which creates trust and faith and allows for an openness of communication which is sometimes not present in a one to one relationship. In other words, the group adds an extra dimension. What is the relevance of these insights to the eulogy?

The answer is quite simple and has to do with the gathering of information about the deceased right after the funeral for the purpose of making a eulogy. Before his experience at Claremont, the author would usually seek out members of the family to ask how they saw the person who was deceased. He would delve into questions about their own individual relationships with their father or whoever the person might be. In this one to one relationship, the author often found himself stymied when a response would be, "Oh well what can I say about my father? He was a good man and I loved him." When the individual was questioned further, the responses would likely be "What more can I say."

After the experience of a course in group counseling in Claremont, the author decided to use the group therapy technique

¹²Ibid., p. 153.

for gathering information about the deceased. At the author's first funeral after the conclusion of the course, he asked members of the family and business associates to gather around a kitchen table to discuss the deceased. The person in question was a very prominent attorney who had been killed on his way home in a tragic automobile accident with a motorcycle. The following is a verbatim which was copied down by the author immediately following the conference:

Rabbi: I have asked you all to be here to be a help to me in trying to reflect the personality of H. as you saw him. I knew H. very well, but I'd like to find out how you saw him through your own eyes. Therefore I'd like to go around the table and get your reactions. We'll start with you D... since you are the oldest son.

D----: Well, he was my father and I loved him very much (pause)

Mother: Yes not only did D... love his father but his father doted on D... He said that he has a great future ahead of him.

D----: Yes father had a lot of confidence in me and I think that was the thing that really made him outstanding in my eyes. He gave me a sense of confidence and not only did he give me a sense of confidence but he inspired confidence in others. (This idea of inspiring confidence in others probably would never have come out from the son if the mother hadn't interjected the fact that the father doted on the son).

Rabbi: So he gave you a sense of security.

D----: Yes.

A. R.: Yes H... was my partner and one thing that I could say about him was that whenever we were in a deal together, his very presence in the room made everybody feel confident and relaxed. He had a way of making people that we were dealing

with have trust in him.

H's---

Mother: Yes, my son got that from his father, my husband. His dad was a very confident man. When we were starting the synagogue in the small town where we first lived, they would come to my husband and ask him what he thought. He said, 'I'm sure we can have something here to promote Jewish life. Let's see what we can do about it.' H... was an awful lot like his father.

J----:

(daughter) Yes, I always thought that dad and grandpop were alike. Each one not only had this confidence, but they had a sense of dignity. They were both dignified men. There was nothing crude or crass about either of them. They carried themselves nicely and were very gentle and refined.

Wife: Yes, my husband, never cursed or never was abusive. Around the house, he tried to instill this feeling of dignity and respect among the children. Isn't that right? (Mother looks toward younger son).

M----: Yes, mother, But he wasn't a prude, and he wasn't stiff necked. You know how he would enjoy a good joke.

L----:

(other sister) He would come home and he would tell us in that cute way of his, a little off color joke and he'd really get a kick out of it. (Everybody smiled again).

A.R. : Talking about the Rabbi, H... was quite a religious man he said that not only was it necessary to go to the synagogue, but one had to do actions outside of the synagogue that could help people. I remember one case in which he lost a great amount of money in order not to take advantage of a widow, and he quoted something in the Bible which said that one should take care of the widow. I bet even you, Rabbi, didn't know of all the little acts of charity that this man performed.

Rabbi: No, I can't say that I did.

It is seen in this short part of the verbatim, how one person built upon a previous person's remarks and how certain characteristics of the deceased were brought out in a natural way. The characteristics of pride, dignity, sense of humor, devotion, and charity were expressed not only in generalities but in specific details which are of immeasurable help in the person making the eulogy. The eulogy with such material cannot help but give support to those who loved the person since it reflects back accurately the persons life as they saw him.

Using this technique, not only can there be a wealth of material garnered, but the material has an air of reality about it which gives a sense of support and comfort to those listening to it. After that particular eulogy, many of his friends came to the author and remarked of how life-like and how realistic the eulogy was. They intimated that it captured the true spirit of the person. What had happened, actually, was that the author just more or less repeated what was said during the group session and put these remarks together in a coherent form. He was little more than a mere reporter and added only parts from the Jewish Tradition which applied to that individual person. However, the main part of the eulogy was based on the words of those who loved him.

Not only does this technique help to give a eulogy, but it helps the group to support each other. When there is a more or less formal discussion of the person by all those that loved

him, each one's feelings reinforce the feelings, moods, and attitudes of the others. There is an interaction which is important since man is "Essentially a social being whose deepest personality needs can be satisfied only in relationships."¹³ Each individual person has feelings of security derived from belonging to an accepting group.¹⁴ And, it allows him to share his deepest feelings with those who love him and understand him.

Another practical act a Rabbi can do is to establish a Chevrah Kadisha. Spiro makes an effective point when he writes that the synagogue is capable of conveying the importance and worthwhileness of many of the regulations and observances developed to Jewish history.¹⁵ He goes on to say that in respect to bereavement, the synagogue authority can be developed and implemented through a Chevrah Kadisha committee within each synagogue. It would be composed of volunteer members and it would be of great help to the bereaved. Spiro admits that although the primary function of the traditional Chevrah Kadisha was to arrange all funeral and burial needs, the duties and definitions of the group could be extended to meet modern circumstances.¹⁶ The committee of this type would take care of the funeral arrangements, co-ordinate with the rabbi of the

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Jack D. Spiro, "A Time to Mourn: The Dynamics of Grief and Mourning in Judaism." (Unpublished D.H.L. dissertation, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, 1961), p.217

¹⁶Ibid., p. 218.

synagogue, and help to make the experience of death and grief, a more personal affair than it usually is. Death and grief activities would center in the synagogue instead of being spread out in the community.¹⁷

Spiro makes a further suggestion that each member of the committee be instructed by a psychologist and a rabbi in the major psychological insights regarding the bereavement crisis, and how these insights relate to the Jewish understanding and handling of grief. When the importance of such a committee is communicated to all members of the synagogue, it is possible that they will come to accept it as authoratative. Spiro then maintains that the Chevrah Kadisha committee would then suggest certain rules and regulations from the tradition which they should do the duration of the mourning period, and the abstentions that they should observe.¹⁸

Spiro continues that once a sense of authoratativeness is achieved, then many of the enactments and customs may become meaningful once again. The Chevrah Kadisha committee would insist upon keeping funerals simple and symbolic of bereavement, on arranging a mourners meal, on conducting services each evening at the mourners home throughout the period of Shevah, on reciting Kaddish every Friday evening or Saturday morning during the mourning period, and on attending the synagogue on the anniversary of the death.¹⁹ What Spiro seems to be saying is

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 219.

that the Chevrah Kadisha could be an extension of the rabbi himself. The Chevrah Kadish would work with the rabbi in setting certain standards and also seeing that these standards are maintained in the committee. The idea of promulgating the latest psychological insights is necessary, and given sincere people it might be done quite effectively.

Creating a Realistic Atmosphere

The greatest practical test the rabbi faces is trying to create a realistic atmosphere for the death situation. We have seen that the bereaved must accept the reality of death, but there are factors outside the bereaved's attitude which create certain difficulties in promoting this realism.

Spiro writes that there are times when death is not denied so much as it is merely de-emphasized. He indicates that the scientific sophistication of modern, industrial society has placed great emphasis on life itself, on the commodities that can be acquired to enhance the material comfort of living. In this situation, death has lost its meaning along with this denial or de-emphasis. The expression of grief is ignored as a necessary and meaningful pattern of reacting to bereavement.²⁰

The difficulty is that many funeral directors go along with this denial or de-emphasis in an attempt to cover up the realities of death with artificial "frosting." The frosting

²⁰Ibid., p. 212.

was alluded to above in such things as hiding under a cover of green grass the dirt that was taken from the grave, covering the casket entirely with flowers, putting the family in a separate room away from the congregation, and not lowering the casket. Likewise, there appears to be a singular lack of backbone in the rabbinate when it comes to attempting to change some of these practices. The author has had many experiences at funerals in Los Angeles where he had requested a certain ritual and the funeral director had replied to him, "We don't do things that way here." Then some of the more subtle funeral directors will intimate that the rabbis in this area don't insist on certain things, thus indicating that those that do are outside of the "norm" and are therefore really out of step. Another favorite ploy that is often used is that when the rabbi asks to have something changed, the funeral director will answer that the family doesn't want it that way. What actually happens is that the funeral director will very briefly run down the order of service without giving the family a chance to ask questions or to have any part in the decisions. He then asks if this procedure will be all right and more often than not the family will agree. That this procedure takes place, was borne out in the statements by ten families who had suffered bereavement. The question asked them by the author was, "Did you have any part in the decisions of making the funeral arrangements?" All the answers were that the funeral director

just outlined the service and that they agreed as to whatever he suggested.

It appears, therefore, that the rabbi is either being edged out of the decision making or abandoning his role as a guide during the time of bereavement. If there are any changes they are, likely as not, made by the family itself. Below is a complete record of one portion of the funeral service, the witnessing of the lowering of the casket into the ground by the family. This is one of the few options that are offered to a family as this is a sensitive area and the funeral director wants to at least have their formal acquiescence to the question. The table in the appendix is from one of the largest Jewish cemeteries in Los Angeles and covers the period from April 25th to May 31, 1965. Out of sixty-five funerals, ten originally said that they wanted to witness the lowering. In this group, there were three changes. Two changed their minds from refusing to witness to agreeing to witness, and one changed it from agreeing to witness and then not to witness. The important point, however, is that there seemed to be no pressure brought upon these people by anyone, including the rabbi, to change the minds of the people who refused to witness the lowering of the casket. And, even more interesting is the fact that when the changes were requested, it was not requested by the rabbi but rather the family.

RECORD OF WITNESS TO LOWERING

Date	Will Witness	Any Change	If so by Whom
4/25	No	No	
26	No	No	
26	No	No	
5/ 2	No	No	
2	No	No	
2	No	No	
2	Yes	No	
2	No	No	
2	No	No	
6	No	No	
7	No	Yes	Family
7	No	No	
10	No	No	
10	No	No	
10	No	No	
11	No	No	
11	No	No	
11	No	No	
11	No	No	
12	No	No	
12	No	Yes	Family
12	No	No	
12	No	No	
14	No	No	
14	Yes	No	
16	Yes	No	
16	Yes	No	
16	No	No	
16	No	No	

RECORD OF WITNESS TO LOWERING (continued)

Date	Will Witness	Any Change	If so by Whom
16	No	No	
16	No	No	
16	Yes	No	
17	Yes	No	
18	No	No	
19	No	No	
19	No	No	
20	No	No	
20	No	No	
21	No	No	
21	No	No	
23	No	No	
23	Yes	No	
23	Yes	No	
23	No	No	
23	No	No	
25	No	No	
26	No	No	
26	No	No	
26	No	No	
26	No	No	
27	No	No	
28	No	No	
28	No	No	
3/ 1	Yes	Yes	Family
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	Yes	No	

RECORD OF WITNESS TO LOWERING (continued)

Date	Will Witness	Any Change	If so by Whom
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	No	No	
1	No	No	

Lest one be too harsh on the funeral directors, a great deal of blame may perhaps be placed upon the rabbi himself. A rabbi in today's life is torn by many pressures, as are clergymen of all denominations. Synagogues are becoming ever larger and more varied in their functions and become in many cases community centers. They have acquired a range of activities that most of them did not have a few decades ago. Administrative responsibilities of the rabbis have, therefore, increased enormously.²¹

In view of these tremendous pressures, it is quite possible to understand how the rabbi would arrogate his responsibilities to the funeral director. He may not have the time (or thinks he does not have the time), to meet with the family for a pre-funeral interview to go over all the details.

²¹Arthur Hertzberg, "The Changing American Rabbinate," Midstream, XII (January, 1966), p. 19.

He may feel it's more efficient for the funeral director to handle all the details of the funeral including the order of the service. Or, he may have some hidden attitudes that prevent him from dealing with the practical aspects of the funeral with the family directly. Bachmann points out that in times of grief the pastor's own personality, feelings, or attitudes toward death, grief and the grief sufferer, will either handicap or enhance his ability to be part of the helping process.²² It is imperative, therefore, that the pastor gets to know himself and his own feelings. One practical solution would be to enroll in a group therapy session with other rabbis to work out feelings and attitudes about death and mourning.

The Rabbi As A Teacher Of Standards And Values

One of the main tenents of Reality Therapy was that the therapist can be a teacher of standards and values. Like Reality Therapy, grief therapy can also utilize a person who teachers standards and values. There is no better person than the rabbi to be the teacher. By teaching standards and values, the rabbi influences people to act responsibly by taking culturally sanctioned action. It has been seen, that the rabbi should offer a supportive relationship and help to set the tone for the funeral. The rabbi also has the responsibility to be a

²² Bachmann, op. cit., p. 26.

teacher and is admirably suited for it.

There are several levels on which a rabbi can operate as this teacher and standard maker. First, there is the community level. A responsible Rabbi should try to meet with his colleagues to work out a sane and sensible system of funeral and mourning practices which are based on psychological insights of mourning. The advantage of this approach of meeting with colleagues cannot be over-emphasized. If the rabbi feels that he is doing what every other rabbi is doing in the community, he has much more support in his actions than if he were acting unilaterally. The argument that "no other rabbi does this" loses any effectiveness that it might have. Likewise, it would help the rabbi in his relationships with the synagogue and the individual grief mourner, if he could say that these are the rules and regulations that exist in the community. That such approach is possible, is evidenced by the Cleveland board of Rabbis which have attempted to define Jewish Religious practice with reference to bereavement customs. The statement is being reproduced in full in the appendix to show that a religious group, no matter what its ideologies can get together on a common statement about bereavement practices. The author of this dissertation does not agree with all of the points, such as the ban against any viewing of the dead, and also feels that the statement is too broad. Nevertheless, it is a step in the right direction.

If the city is large enough, then it would be wise that all the rabbis of one denomination get together and formulate practical bereavement policies for their own particular branch. The author maintains that bereavement practices should be the same for all branches, but realizes that there are certain difficulties which might prevent the three branches of Judaism from offering standard bereavement practices. For example, the Orthodox may feel that any suggestion by the Reform would be a weakening of religious law even though it might have valid psychological import.

In any event, the rabbi certainly should be the master of his own synagogue when it comes to ritual. He may not be able to influence the other rabbis around him to agree on common practices, but he certainly should be able to influence his congregation. The rabbi should sit down with his religious committee or ritual committee and formulate definite and specific customs of mourning which should be applicable to all members of the congregation who are serviced by the rabbi and Synagogue. Few, if any exceptions should be made to this common set of practices. People will accept things if they know that everybody else is doing the same thing. People at a time of bereavement would probably welcome a strong forceful and clear policy in regards to funerals and mourning. An abbreviated set of rules, which can be spelled out in more detail, is as follows:

1. In the event of death, contact the rabbi, or the chairman of the Chevrah Kadisha immediately (name and phone number of chairman would be listed).
2. After consultation with the rabbi, members of the family with members of the Chevrah Kadisha should make the actual funeral arrangements with the funeral director.
3. Only a wooden coffin in keeping to Jewish tradition should be used.
4. Donations should be made to charity in honor of the deceased rather than allowing flowers.
5. Viewing of the body will be permitted under controlled circumstances.
6. Before the funeral begins mourners should observe the rite of K'riah which is the cutting of a ribbon on one's clothing.
7. The mourners are expected to sit among the congregation and not in the family room.
8. Judaism is opposed to cremation and therefore recommends that interment be in the ground. It is strongly urged that the family witness the lowering of the casket into the earth.
9. Upon return from the cemetery, a pitcher of water should be placed on the outside of the house to wash one's hands before entering.
10. A meal of consolation should be prepared by one's neighbors. It is traditional that hard boiled eggs and bread be among the foods that are served.
11. A candle that can burn for seven days should be lit immediately upon the return from the cemetery.
12. The period of Shivah is regularly seven days. In the event of economic hardship it may be lessened to three days.
13. Mourners should sit on low stools that will be provided by the funeral parlor. They should wear bedroom slippers and not be concerned about personal appearance. It is customary in some homes to cover the mirrors, although it is not a strict rule of law.

14. A Minyan (or quorum of ten men) will be arranged by the Chevrah Kadisha and the services should be held in the house of mourning for seven days.
15. Kaddish should be said daily for eleven months by men. It should be said on Friday nights by the women.
16. The Yahrzeit, of yearly anniversary should be observed and the Yizkor memorial prayers should be said during the holidays of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Succoth, (the Festival of Tabernacles), Pesah (Passover), and Shavouth (the Feast of Weeks).
17. If there are any further questions do not hesitate to ask the rabbi or the members of the Chevrah Kadisha.

At first glance, this list of rules seems to be scant. However, it does have the advantage of being very concise and easy to read. The language is simple and direct. It tells the people what to do, step by step, and allows them to ask any further questions that they may have. Such a list can be printed and distributed to the entire congregation by a mass mailing. At the time when a family suffers a death, the rabbi can bring the list again and leave it with members of the family so that they can look at it at their convenience. By having such a guide, the family knows what to do and has a structured situation which takes the mystery and fear out of the mourning practices. The difficulty with the Cleveland statement "Time of Sorrow" in the appendix is that many of its statements are vague and although the language is beautiful it does not give too specific instructions. A person reading it may admire it, but it lacks a firm direction that is needed in the hour of

mourning.

The third level on which the rabbi acts as a teacher of standards and values, is on a personal level. The author remembers an extended conversation with a funeral director of one of the largest funeral parlors in Los Angeles. When he was asked about the different rituals and how he decided exactly what to do, the funeral director said that it is largely a matter of family preference. He said that the funeral directors are taught to have the attitude of "It's your funeral" toward the mourners. In other words, whatever the family wants and whatever the family thinks will bring them comfort should be utilized. There are two things about this statement that don't seem to ring true. It was stated above, the funeral director really doesn't allow the family to decide what they want, but usually suggests a pattern which is convenient for the director. Second, even if the funeral director did allow the family to make all the decisions, then where would the family get its guidance? Many people do not have experience of having many funerals and therefore simply do not know what to do. They may decide on the thing simply on the basis of how it strikes them at the moment without being aware of the deeper meanings of certain observances. Here is where the rabbi can make his most important contribution. The rabbi can state what traditional Judaism has advocated in regards to funerals. By giving the mourners a frame of reference, the rabbi provides needed

guidance in a difficult time. This is not to say that the rabbi acts in an authoritarian manner, but rather that he suggests rituals for the family to accept or reject. The rabbi should be aware of the needs and desires of individuals and families and their own internal frame of reference.

The rabbi may often be asked questions not only on ritual matters, but on matters with which ritual does not deal. Such a case might occur with a question about the use of tranquilizing pills. The use of tranquilizing pills is nowhere covered in Jewish ritual. The rabbi, however, might suggest that the mourner not use them since they would blunt the reality of death.

Many times the rabbi is asked by the family about witnessing the lowering of the casket. The family often may have ambivalent feelings about seeing their loved ones lowered into the earth.

The rabbi can offer gentle guidance by saying that this lowering is done and is part of Jewish tradition. "However," he might add, "if you have very strong feelings against it, we can eliminate it."

By informing them of traditional usage, the rabbi gives guidelines to the members of the family. They might think that lowering the casket is passé. By the rabbi saying this is an acceptable practice, they may feel secure in deciding affirmatively. On the other hand, if they do have strong feelings about the lowering, the rabbi has granted them an

alternative by offering to eliminate the lowering.

The rabbi is a teacher, not only in life, but in aspects of death. His teaching ministry will be more effective if he uses a long range approach in educating his congregation about aspects of death instead of waiting until the event actually occurs.

Conclusion and Summary

The rabbinate in America has a glorious opportunity of service when it comes to the mourning situation. The rabbi not only has Jewish tradition to rely upon but the new insights of modern grief therapy as well. He has practical theoretical frameworks such as Reality Therapy and the "Revised Model" of counseling. By knowing the five major principles of grief therapy, and utilizing them with the theory of grief counseling in which the rabbi acts in a supportive manner bringing reality to the situation and being a teacher of standards and values, a Jewish clergyman has an opportunity to play a vital and necessary role in the life of the mourner. If there can be a blending of age old folk wisdom and modern insights, there truly can be a "Living Approach to Death."

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

From the material covered in the preceding chapters, several dominant themes emerge:

A Surveying the material dealing with grief therapy and condensing all the overlapping rules and suggestions concerning bereavement, five major principles were distilled. These major principles are as follows:

1. One must face the reality of death.
2. Deep feelings including negative ones, must be expressed.
3. There must be a maintaining of protecting and supporting relationships.
4. There must be a need to be needed.
5. There must be a need for some type of culturally sanctioned action.

B After a detailed survey of Jewish mourning customs, an attempt was made to relate some of these customs to the five major principles of grief therapy. Even though these customs were of ancient origin, some seem to have a great deal of pertinence in regards to modern insights of grief therapy. They allowed the mourner to have some purpose and plan for mourning and helped with the draining of the grief wound.

C It was also shown that the traditional Jewish funeral in America has changed under the impact of modern culture. Two cities were chosen as samples. One was a stronghold of Jewish tradition and the other was a large metropolitan area. In both cities there was an attrition of Jewish mourning practices although this attrition was not as noticeable in the smaller city. It was pointed out, however, that the future pattern of American urban growth was away from smaller towns towards larger cities, and the effect of this pattern will probably mean that Jewish mourning customs will even be weakened more.

D Taking this acculturation process in America as an accepted fact and the change in mourning customs as a probable continuing process, the question is whether this change will be a positive one or a negative one as far as the mourning process is concerned. Based upon present sources, it would appear that most of the results of an acculturation have a negative effect on the healthy mourning process.

E On the other hand, there appears to be certain cross cultural influences which might improve the mourning process. These improvements, however, are very small in comparison to the negative factors which are found in modern culture. If the clergyman can hope to reverse the trend of the present day mourning practices, he should know basic grief principles. He can also utilize a theoretical framework on which he can base his general approach to the mourning process. This approach

should be eclectic. Two possibilities for part of this theoretical approach are Reality Therapy of Dr. William Glasser and the "Revised Model" of Dr. Howard Clinebell, Jr. The thrust of additional insights, based upon these two types of counseling, allow for a formulation of a new theory of grief counseling which can be stated as follows: A rabbi should offer a supportive relationship in which he tries to get the bereaved to accept the reality of the situation, to act responsibly within the rules of culturally sanctioned action, to allow him to fulfill his needs through utilization of the five basic principles of grief, with the rabbi acting as a teacher of standards and values.

F Finally, the rabbi, by using himself as a teacher of standards and values and by virtue of his role in the community, can offer practical suggestions for improving the mourning process. He can use his influence on the three levels of community, synagogue, and personal relationships. He can see to it that the reality of death is emphasized by assuming leadership of the funeral service and influencing the funeral director to fulfill the requirements of Jewish mourning. He can mobilize his own Chevrah Kadisha committee to serve as an extension of his office. The rabbi bears a great responsibility for being in the vanguard of promoting "healthy" mourning in time of bereavement.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

IN TIME OF SORROW

The following statement was prepared and approved by the Greater Cleveland Board of Rabbis defining Jewish religious practice with reference to bereavement customs.

BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF are universal experiences for which every religious faith has reverently developed attitudes and practices, rituals and customs to enhance respect for the dignity of the dead and to comfort and solace those who mourn them. Judaism, no less, brings its full measure of consolation to its sorrow-laden. The treasured cadences of the T'hillim, the exalted reaffirmation of faith in the hallowed recital of the Kaddish, the whole treasury of prayer, afford comfort when loss of dear ones is immediate and sorrow overwhelms.

AS UNIVERSAL as is the experience of death and mourning, so is the confusion that strangely abounds at such a time. Under the weight of tragedy, taste and sensitivity are often sacrificed to expediency and pressures where none should prevail. If Jews have lost the central meaning of mourning or are at a loss to know what behavior is expected of mourners, their families and friends, then this expression of religious rites and practices can be helpful to them. It is our hope too that in reviving the ritually acceptable patterns of Jewish mourning, we shall at the same time aid our community to eliminate excesses which inevitably impair its spiritual maturity.

WHEN BEREAVEMENT COMES, whether sudden or long expected, the poignancy of love and devotion to dear ones and the beauty of human ties, fondly nurtured over the years, are more profoundly felt. No matter how one prepares for the time of death, the confrontation with it is traumatic. More than ever at such a time, the closest family of the dead must find by and with themselves the release of pent-up feelings and of tears as well as the means of consoling one another in their shared bereavement. Arrangements for the funeral, the necessity to notify family and dear ones away from home, the disposition of personal problems, financial and otherwise, which death often makes emergent--these are but some of the demands mourners must face while the burden of immediate loss weighs upon them.

WHO SHALL BE CALLED

Certainly among the first to be called after the funeral director should be the family's rabbi, who knows the family and is indeed well acquainted with the experience of bereavement and who sympathetically wishes to give his comfort to his congregants, or the Temple office. The rabbi's advice and counsel can help the mourner face his grief, relieve the burdensome problems which beset him, and provide sustenance and support to beleaguered faith when death comes.

The funeral director too lends the experience of his profession to ease the burdens. He is prepared to meet the financial limitations of all and is anxious to be cooperative in every respect. Sensitive to requirements of every segment of the Jewish Community, funeral directors have established the precedent of willing cooperation with all rabbis to fulfill the demands of all Jews, Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform.

THE RESPECT FOR PRIVATE GRIEF

Because the death of a person so intimately involves his closest family, the privacy of the family should be respected, friends and acquaintances should wait to make condolence calls until after the funeral. The intrusion of casual friends at such a time is often more hindrance than help, more inhibiting than comforting. For this reason, the rabbis enjoined as the first principle of conduct in time of grief this admonition: "Do not comfort the mourner while his beloved dead lies before him."

With rare exceptions, and only where special circumstances dictates, there should be no so-called visitation hour at the funeral home preceding the funeral service. This has increasingly become a custom in violation of tradition and the proprieties.

The public "viewing" of the deceased is also inconsistent with Jewish law and tradition and exposes to the eyes of strangers those who in death no longer can protect themselves against undue curiosity. Besides, people who attend the funeral are frequently required against their will and disposition to see the deceased or are put to the necessity of avoiding the experience with painful difficulty. "Viewing" the dead should be confined only at its insistence, for this last act of parting can also bring a great measure of comfort to mourners.

The practice of combining Jewish services with Masonic or other Lodge services should be discouraged.

TO HELP THE MOURNER

Only the closest circle of friends and relatives can serve the mourners best in the immediate wake of death, to console and to give the comfort of their sympathetic presence. For all others, to attend the funeral of the deceased is perhaps the most positive act of consolation to those who mourn, for in this gesture alone mourners are made aware of the shared feelings of loss and respect for the memory of their beloved dead.

Regrettably, sociability often extends to the gathering at funeral services. The majesty of death and respect for the dead invite quietness and serenity which are soon destroyed when excessive conversation and social mixing occur at funeral parlors in the presence of the dead. In keeping with the spirit of mourning and decorum, the bereaved family should not "receive" after the service at the graveside but should return at once to their cars and their homes.

MISPLACED SOCIABILITY

Sociability increasingly invades the area of comfort and consolation. It seems to follow on the heels of the funeral service in the practice of serving drinks to those who come to the mourners' home, in the atmosphere of excessive feasting to which all are invited, and sadly pervades the solemn sanctity of the services conducted in the home. In accordance with tradition, the days of shivah are days of mourning, and those who visit mourners must try to remember that the sole purpose of their call is to bring consolation and should be brief, and to avoid artificial and trivial conversation unrelated to the condolence call.

THE HELPFUL VISIT

It is in the days following the funeral, during the seven day period of intense mourning and especially during the weeks that follow, that the visit of friends and relatives is most helpful. The tensions are diminished, a greater peace may come now that the dear one is laid to rest, and the bereaved are more susceptible to the sympathy of neighbors and friends. They eagerly welcome the kindly reminiscences of those who knew their beloved; but it is more helpful for friends to listen to the mourner reminisce about his beloved. There is helpfulness too in the heartwarming offerings of food and services for which mourners in the first days of bereavement may not have the time or inclination. Though the meal following a funeral often assumes the proportions of a feast, the festive character of which mocks its original intent, there is still more measure of consolation for mourners in knowing that they have returned to a

saddened home to which others have brought some tangible and intangible evidence of their sympathy and regard. It is not necessary to feed all who come to the mourners' home after the funeral; only the family should thus be served. As for the "meal" itself, no law dictates, only tradition suggests.

Friends may also express their sympathy through gifts and kindness to mourners. At all times gifts to charitable organizations in memory of the dead are appropriate.

At all times, simplicity is the key to all arrangements for the funeral and the customs following.

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